

Global Energy War: Washington's New Kissinger

The appointment of US Marine General James Jones

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Global Research, February 02, 2009

Stop NATO 2 February 2009

Theme: [Oil and Energy](#), [US NATO War](#)
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Lost amid the national and international fanfare accompanying the inauguration of the 44th president of the United States is attention to the person who is slated to be the next major foreign policy architect and executor, retired US Marine General James Jones.

In nearly identical phraseology that cannot be construed as either fortuitous or without foundation, the Washington Post of November 22, 2008 referred to the then pending selection of Jones as US National Security Adviser in these terms:

“Sources familiar with the discussions said Obama is considering expanding the scope of the job to give the adviser the kind of authority once wielded by powerful figures such as Henry A. Kissinger.”

And the following day's Israeli Ha'aretz wrote:

“Jones is expected to play a key role in the Obama administration. According to U.S. press reports, he will be as strong as Henry Kissinger, the all-powerful national security adviser to President Richard Nixon.”

The analogy is with the role of Henry Kissinger as National Security Adviser to the first and second Nixon administrations (1969-1977, continuing into the Ford White House) and as both National Security Adviser and Secretary of State during the second term; that is, as a then unprecedentedly influential player in determining US foreign policy.

A similar comparison can be made with the Carter administration's National Security Adviser, Zbigniew Brzezinski, the true power behind the foreign policy throne from 1977-1981, with Secretaries of State Cyrus Vance and, briefly, Edmund Muskie, largely figureheads in relation to him.

James Jones is now the first career military officer to hold the post as head of the National Security Council since retired general Colin Powell did so in the second Reagan Administration and is the first former NATO Supreme Allied Commander to do so.

Jones was appointed to the NATO post of Supreme Allied Commander Europe (SACEUR) and the overlapping, essentially co-terminous one of Commander, United States European Command (COMUSEUCOM) in the first Bush term and is part of the two-thirds of the Obama administration's foreign policy triumvirate - National Security Adviser, Secretary of State, Secretary of Defense - inherited from the preceding administration. The other is, of course,

Defense Secretary Robert Gates, who like Jones is a graduate of Georgetown University, with a doctorate degree in Sovietology and Russian studies.

As commander of the Pentagon's European Command (EUCOM) Jones was in charge of the largest area of military responsibility in world history, one that encompassed anywhere from 13-21 million square miles and included 92 of the world's 192 nations. And as NATO's Supreme Allied Commander he was the chief military commander of an expanding military bloc of twenty six full members, two new candidates and twenty three Partnership for Peace, six Mediterranean Dialogue, six Gulf Cooperation Council and assorted other military partners in South and Far East Asia and the South Pacific, altogether on five continents.

While wearing both the above braided hats, Jones was the major architect of what last October 1st was officially launched as the first new US military command in over half a century, Africa Command (AFRICOM), whose chartered area of operations includes fifty-three nations.

AFRICOM's historical precedents were commented upon by a Ghanaian news source almost three years ago:

"Marine General James L. Jones, Head of the US European Command...said the Pentagon was seeking to acquire access to two kinds of bases in Senegal, Ghana, Mali and Kenya and other African countries.

"The new US strategy based on the conclusions of May 2001 report of the President's National Energy Policy Development group chaired by Vice President Richard Cheney and known as the Cheney report." (Ghana Web, February 23, 2006)

And by a Nigerian commentator the following year:

"[In January of 2002 the African Oil Policy Initiative Group] recommended that African oil be treated as a priority for the national security of the US after 9/11, that the US government declares the Gulf of Guinea an "area of vital interest" and that it set up a sub-command structure for US forces in the region. In September 2002, the then US Defence Secretary, Donald Rumsfeld, put forward a proposal to establish a NATO Rapid Response Force (NRF) which was approved by the defence ministers of NATO in Brussels in June 2003 and was inaugurated in October 2003." (Leadership, November 22, 2007)

In keeping with the above, after his formal selection as nominee for National Security Adviser late last year, Jones revealed that "[A]s commander of NATO, I worried early in the mornings about how to protect energy facilities and supply chain routes as far away as Africa, the Persian Gulf and Caspian Sea." (Agence France-Presse, November 30, 2008)

Or as a US daily newspaper put it later:

"During his 2003-2006 stint as NATO's supreme commander, Jones stressed his view that energy policy was a top national security matter for the United States and a leading international security priority. For the past year, Jones has been president and CEO of the U.S. Chamber of Commerce's Institute for 21st Century Energy. Until his Dec. 1 selection by Obama, he also served as a board member of the Chevron Corp." (Houston Chronicle, December 25, 2008)

The above reflected designs voiced earlier, as evidenced by:

“NATO’s top commander of operations, U.S. General James Jones, has said he sees a potential role for the alliance in protecting key shipping lanes such as those around the Black Sea and oil supply routes from Africa to Europe.” (Reuters, November 27, 2006)

And shortly before stepping down as both European Command and NATO commander, Jones, addressing US business leaders, said:

“Officials at U.S. European Command spend between 65 to 70 percent of their time on African issues, Jones said....Establishing such a group [military task force in West Africa] could also send a message to U.S. companies ‘that investing in many parts of Africa is a good idea,’ the general said.” [U.S. Department of Defense, August 18, 2006)

And, just as candidly, he and his NATO civilian cohort declared:

“NATOs’ executives are ready to use warships to ensure the security of offshore oil and gas transportation routes from Western Africa, reportedly said Jaap de Hoop Scheffer, NATO’s Secretary General, speaking at the session of foreign committee of PACE [Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe]. “On April 30 General James Jones, commander-in-chief of NATO in Europe, reportedly said NATO was going to draw up the plan for ensuring security of oil and gas industry facilities. “In this respect the block is willing to ensure security in unstable regions where oil and gas are produced and transported.” (Trend News Agency, May 3, 2006)

Note that while speaking to those he assumes to be interested and complicit parties, Jones is quite candid in moving his finger across the map of the world and indicating precisely where the Pentagon’s - not the State Department’s, say, or the US Department of Energy’s - priorities lie.

And they are, as mentioned above, immediately in three of the five areas of the world where hitherto unexploited or underexploited massive oil and natural gas deposits lie: Africa’s Gulf of Guinea, the Black and Caspian Seas and the Persian Gulf.

The other two contested zones and already current battlegrounds between the West and Russia and other emerging nations in this regard are the Arctic Circle and the northern part of South America and the Caribbean. Southeast Asia may be soon be another candidate for the role.

The drive into Africa, from the Mediterranean north to the South African way station to Antarctica and its offshore environs (the sixth key global energy chess piece) and from the war-torn northeast to the oil-rich Atlantic west, is thus integrally linked to the concomitant US and NATO military expansion into the Black and Caspian Seas and Persian Gulf regions.

Mind, this is not a direct, reductionist ‘war for oil’; it is rather an international strategic bid by a consortium of declining Western powers united under the NATO aegis to seize and dominate world energy resources and transportation lines to in turn maintain and expand

global economic and political hegemony. (Indeed, the two nations most central to Western plans for trans-Eurasian oil transit plans, Azerbaijan and Georgia, have recorded the largest per capita and percentile increases in military spending in the world over the past five years – a case of oil for war rather than the reverse.)

Jones' resume as top military commander of both US European Command and of NATO gave him, and still gives him, a pivotal role in what the State Department of Condoleezza Rice (herself with a doctorate degree in Sovietology and Russian studies) has referred to for years as the "push east and south."

As the US armed forces newspaper Stars and Stripes reported a year and a half ago:

"Five years ago, then-Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld sent marching orders to Marine Gen. James L. Jones, telling him that the U.S. European Command needed an overhaul to meet the unique challenges of the 21st century. "Jones' plan, started in 2002, called for the moving of thousands of troops from Europe back to the United States, moving troops into Eastern Europe and setting up forward operating sites in Africa."

What has occurred in the interim regarding the first trajectory, the push to the east, is that the Pentagon and NATO have selected seven military bases in Bulgaria and Romania, after the latter two's NATO accession in 2004, for land, naval and air 'lily pads' on the Black Sea for operations in the Caucasus, Ukraine, Central and South Asia, the Eastern Mediterranean and the Persian Gulf.

The US and its Alliance cohorts have similarly turned another Black Sea, and Caucasus, nation – Georgia – into a military and strategic energy corridor heading both east and south.

In fact Georgia is the central link in what Western officials for years have touted as the "project of the century": The Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan (BTC) pipeline transporting oil from the Caspian to the Mediterranean Seas.

Along with its sister projects, the Baku-Tbilisi-Erzurum gas pipeline and the Kars-Tbilisi-Baku ("China to London") railway, the West envisions plans to export oil and natural gas from as far east as Kazakhstan on the Chinese border over, around and under the Caspian Sea to the South Caucasus and from there north to Ukraine and Poland to the Baltic Sea and onto Western Europe, and south along the Mediterranean to Israel to be shipped on tankers through the Suez Canal and the Red Sea and across the Arabian Sea to countries like India and Japan. That is, back to East Asia where much of it originated.

If any more grand (or grandiose) and far-reaching geopolitical design has ever been contemplated, history fails to record it.

Chinese military analyst Lin Zhiyuan summed up the general strategy over two years ago:

"[N]ew military bases, airports and training bases will be built in Hungary, Romania, Poland, Bulgaria and other nations to ensure "gangways" to some areas in the Middle East, African and Asia in possible military actions in the years ahead. "More important, the United States will successfully move eastward the gravity and frontline of its Europe defense, go on beefing up its military presence in the Baltic states and the central Asia region, and also raise its capability to contain Russia by stepping into the backyard of the former

Soviet Union. "James L. Jones, commander of the European command of the US army [EUCOM, as well as NATO], acknowledged that EETAF [Eastern European Task Force] would "greatly upgrade" the capacity of coordinating the forces of the U.S. and its allies, and the capacity of training and operation in Eurasia and the Caucasian region, so that they are able to make faster responses in some conflict areas...." (People's Daily, December 5, 2006)

The author was perhaps referring to an earlier statement by James Jones, one reported on the US State Department's website on March 10, 2006:

"[Jones] discussed ongoing shifts in troop levels, the creation of rotational force hubs in Bulgaria and Romania, and initiatives in Africa....Those forces remaining in Europe will focus on being able swiftly to deploy to temporary locations in southeast Europe, Eurasia and Africa. Along the Black Sea, recent basing agreements will allow U.S. forces to start establishing an Eastern European Task Force [which will] "significantly increases" the ability of U.S. and partner forces to coordinate and conduct training and missions in Eurasia and the Caucasus.... Jones also described Caspian Guard, a program to improve the capabilities of Azerbaijan and Kazakhstan in a strategic region that borders northern Iran. "Africa's vast potential makes African stability a near-term global strategic imperative."

In the past week the Pentagon's Central Command chief General David Petraeus visited Kazakhstan, Kyrgystan and Turkmenistan, the first and third on both ends of the Caspian Sea and the two largest producers of oil and natural gas in Central Asia.

This is the further implementation of Jones' plan which he bluntly articulated well over three years ago:

"NATO's top military commander is seeking an important new security role for private industry and business leaders as part of a new security strategy that will focus on the economic vulnerabilities of the 26-country alliance. "Two immediate and priority projects for NATO officials to develop with private industry are to secure the pipelines bringing Russian oil and gas to Europe...to secure ports and merchant shipping, the alliance Supreme Commander, Gen. James Jones of the U.S. Marine Corps said Wednesday. "A further area of NATO interest to secure energy supplies could be the Gulf of Guinea off the West African coast, Jones noted...'a serious security problem.' Oil companies were already spending more than a billion dollars a year on security in the region, he noted, pointing to the need for NATO and business to confer on the common security concern." (United Press International, October 13, 2005)

On the far western end of what British geographer and proto-geostrategist Halford Mackinder called the World Island (Africa, Asia, Europe, the Middle East) lies the Atlantic Coast of Africa and the Gulf of Guinea.

It is here that then EUCOM and NATO top military commander Jones arranged the foundation of the future AFRICOM.

Though not without attending to the rest of the continent as well during his dual tenure from 2003-2006.

In April of 2006 he already advocated the following:

“Jones...raised the prospect of NATO taking a role to counter piracy off the coast of the Horn of Africa and the Gulf of Guinea, especially when it threatens energy supply routes to Western nations.” (Associated Press, April 24, 2006)

Two and a half years before NATO initiated the Atalanta interdiction operation in the Horn of Africa and the Gulf of Aden last autumn (NATO warships even docked at the Kenyan port city of Mombasa), Jones was laying the groundwork for the NATO cum European Union mission of today.

As the Horn of Africa region was the only part of Africa not formerly in EUCOM’s area of responsibility (in was in Central Command’s), Jones was clearly speaking of an AFRICOM that wouldn’t appear for another 30 months.

Also, in addition to bilateral military agreements with Northern African states, Jones was NATO Supreme Commander in 2004 when at the Istanbul summit NATO upgraded the Alliance’s seven Mediterranean Dialogue members – the bulk of which are in North Africa (Algeria, Egypt, Mauritania, Morocco and Tunisia) – to an enhanced partnership status.

He also created the military wing of the US State Department’s Pan Sahel Initiative. The Pentagon’s website described it in early 2006 as follows:

“The 2002 Pan Sahel Initiative involved training and equipping a least one rapid-reaction company in each of the four Sahel states: Mali, Mauritania, Niger and Chad. The current initiative involves those four states and Algeria, Morocco, Senegal, Tunisia and Nigeria.

“‘U.S. Naval Forces Europe, (the command’s) lead component in this initiative, has developed a robust maritime security strategy and regional 10-year campaign plan for the Gulf of Guinea region.’ “‘Africa’s vast potential makes African stability a near-term global strategic imperative,’ Jones said.” (Defense Link, March 8, 2006}

In the following year an Algerian article called “U.S. embassies turned into command posts in North Africa” added this:

“[T]he countries involved in the U.S. embassies command posts are Algeria, Morocco, Tunisia, Mauritania, Niger, Mali, Chad and Senegal. A major focus of AFRICOM will be the Gulf of Guinea, with its enormous oil reserves in Nigeria, Equatorial Guinea, Gabon, Angola and the Congo Republic.... -The U.S. is already pouring \$500 million into its Trans-Sahel Counterterrorism Initiative that embraces Morocco, Tunisia, and Algeria in North Africa, and nations boarding the Sahara including Mauritania, Niger, Mali, Mauritania, Chad and Senegal.” (Ech Chorouk, October 17, 2007}

And in May of 2005 NATO began its first official operation on the African continent, transporting troops to the Darfur region of Sudan, thereby beginning Western military intrusion into the Central African Republic-Chad-Sudan triangle.

Yet the Gulf of Guinea remained the main focus of attention.

No later than 2003 Western news sources reported on a suspected unprecedented oil bonanza in the former Portuguses possessions of Sao Tome and Principe in the Gulf.

Shortly afterward there was talk of the Pentagon establishing a naval base on Sao Tome.

The State Department estimated at the time that the US was then currently importing 15% of its oil from the Gulf of Guinea and that the figure would rise to 25% in a few years.

Western Africa oil offers two key advantages to the US. It's comparatively high-grade crude and can be transported on tankers directly across the Atlantic Ocean, thereby circumventing straits, canals and other potential chokepoints and attendant customs duties and taxes by littoral nations.

Throughout his time as EUCOM and NATO top military commander Jones touted what he described as ongoing and permanent US and NATO naval presence in the Gulf.

In June of 2006 NATO held its first large-scale military exercises in Africa, in fact initiating the NATO Rapid Response Force, north of the Gulf in Cape Verde.

Below are accounts of the drills:

"Hundreds of elite North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (Nato) troops backed by fighter planes and warships will storm a tiny volcanic island off Africa's Atlantic coast this week in what the Western alliance hopes will prove a potent demonstration of its ability to project power around the world." (Associated Press, June 21, 2006)

"Seven thousand NATO troops conducted war games on the Atlantic Ocean island of Cape Verde on Thursday in the latest sign of the alliance's growing interest in playing a role in Africa. "The land, air and sea exercises were NATO's first major deployment in Africa and designed to show the former Cold War giant can launch far-flung military operations at short notice. "'You are seeing the new NATO, the one that has the ability to project stability,' said NATO Secretary-General Jaap de Hoop Scheffer told a news conference after NATO troops stormed a beach on one of the islands on the archipelago in a mock assault on a fictitious terrorist camp. "NATO Supreme Allied Commander Europe James Jones, the alliance soldier in charge of NATO operations, said he hoped the two-week Cape Verde exercises would help break down negative images about NATO in Africa and elsewhere." (Reuters, June 22, 2006)

Jones may have inveigled Reuters with concerns about NATO's public image, but its rival agency was more forthcoming:

"NATO is developing a special plan to safeguard oil and gas fields in the region, says its Supreme Allied Commander on Europe, Gen. James Jones.

"He said a training session will be held in the Atlantic oceanic area and the Cabo Verde island in June to outline activities to protect the routes transporting oil to Western Europe....Jones said the alliance is ready to ensure the security of oil-producing and transporting regions." (Associated Press, May 2, 2006)

That same month Jones was in the northern tip of the Gulf, in Monrovia, the capital of the one nation on the continent that seemed at first willing to host the future AFRICOM's headquarters after Washington assisted in the toppling of the Charles Taylor government and the installation of former US-based Ellen Johnson Sirleaf to head its successor.

A local paper reported:

“A United States military delegation today met with President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf at her Executive Mansion office in Monrovia. The delegation was headed by General James Jones of the US Marine Corps who is also the head of the US government European Command. “Also with General Jones today were seven members of his delegation, who were in full US military uniform. General Jones reaffirmed his government’s support in assisting the Liberian government in the formation of the new Liberian army. He said some members of his command, were due in Liberia soon, to begin the training of the new Liberian army, which is expected to begin in July. (African News Dimension, June 2, 2006)

Two months before the US State Department reported on another of Jones’ African plans, the Gulf of Guinea Maritime Security Initiative, and thereby tied together a few threads in Washington’s African tapestry:

“‘Left unattended, political instability in Africa could require reactive and repeated interventions at enormous costs, as in the case of Liberia,’ Jones said.” (Washington File, April 7, 2006)

And in the intervening month Jones reminded readers that he still wore two commanders’ caps and that his energy and broader geopolitical strategy encompassed, still, both south and east:

“‘Our strategic goal is to expand...to Eastern Europe and Africa.... -“‘The United States is not unchallenged in its quest to gain influence in and access to Africa.’” (Stars And Stripes, March 9, 2006)

And so it remains.

The West, the US in the first instance, is waging an unparalleled drive to retain and expand what military, political and economic domination and monopolies it has wrested from the rest of the world over the past five centuries, and control of the globe’s energy resources and their transportation is a vital component of that reckless campaign.

Africa is rapidly shaping up to be a major battleground in that international struggle.

With James Jones as new US National Security chief, complemented by the ‘soft power’ efforts of former State Department Africa hand Dr. Susan Rice as probable US ambassador to the United Nations, the continent’s and the world’s guard must not be relaxed.

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