

Libya: New AFRICOM And NATO Beachhead In Africa

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On June 15 the news agency of the U.S. Defense Department, American Forces Press Service, ran a story on commander of U.S. Africa Command (AFRICOM) Army General Carter Ham's testimony before the House Armed Services Committee four months before in which he averred that last year's war against Libya "imparted important lessons" for the Pentagon's newest regional military command.

Operation Odyssey Dawn, as the first twelve days (March 19-31) of the naval blockade and air attacks against the North African nation of slightly more than six million people was codenamed, was AFRICOM's first operation - its first war - before the North Atlantic Treaty Organization took control with its six-month Operation Unified Protector.

Testifying with General Ham was Admiral James Stavridis, jointly commander of U.S. European Command (EUCOM) and NATO's Supreme Allied Commander Europe.

AFRICOM was created by EUCOM under the tutelage of dual EUCOM and NATO top commanders Generals James Jones and Bantz John Craddock in the years before achieving full operational capability - that is, being launched as an independent unified combatant command - on October 1, 2008. In the year preceding that, during its October 1, 2007-September 30, 2008 initial operational capability, it was subordinated to EUCOM. Almost all of Africa's now 54 countries (with South Sudan becoming an independent nation last year) were in EUCOM's area of responsibility and all but Egypt (still covered under U.S. Central Command) are now in AFRICOM's. As such, AFRICOM encompasses more nations than any other Pentagon regional command and all but one nation in a continent that is the world's second-most populous, with Africa's population having surpassed one billion last year.

The war against Libya was the inauguration of AFRICOM as an active military force capable of waging large-scale combat operations, as it was NATO's first war in Africa, building on a strategy first unveiled in the massive Steadfast Jaguar war games in Cape Verde in 2006 to launch the global NATO Response Force.

During his congressional testimony, AFRICOM chief Ham applauded new military-to- military relations with the barely functioning government of Libya, which was bombed into power by NATO warplanes and U.S. Tomahawk cruise and Hellfire missiles, specifying the activation of an Office of Security Cooperation at the U.S. embassy in Tripoli that, according to the Pentagon press service, "can help coordinate security assistance, international military education and training and other security cooperation. "

The same source reported that "Ham said military operations in Libya drove home the point that all U.S. combatant commands including Africom must be capable of operating across the full spectrum of conflict," and quoted him directly as pledging:

“It is probably not going to be very often where Africa Command goes to the more kinetic, the more offensive operations in Africa. But nonetheless, we have to be ready to do that if the president requires that of us.”

As he already has. U.S. Army Africa commander Major General David Hogg recently disclosed that the Army will begin the deployment of over 3,000 troops to Africa beginning next year [1], complementing special forces operations in Central Africa, a counterinsurgency campaign in Mali, involvement in the ongoing war in Somalia (especially from Camp Lemonnier in Djibouti where the U.S. has 2,000-3,000 troops, aircraft and ships), drone missile attacks in Yemen and Somalia directed by U.S. military personnel in Seychelles and Ethiopia and other, more covert, military operations throughout the continent.

Ham also spoke of AFRICOM’s Operation Odyssey Dawn being the model for expanding war-time cooperation with traditional NATO allies to include military partners in the Arab world, which is to say those outside Africa; to wit, the six members of the Gulf Cooperation Council. Last year Qatar and the United Arab Emirates, long-standing U.S. military partners and since 2004 members of NATO’s Istanbul Cooperation Initiative program, supplied warplanes under NATO command for the merciless six-month bombardment of Libya.

The AFRICOM commander added that the collaboration between his command and EUCOM was central to the AFRICOM cum NATO war last year, saying, “we could not have responded on the timelines required for operations in Libya had air and maritime forces not been forward-stationed in Europe” and “Operations in Libya have truly brought U.S. European Command and U.S. Africa Command to a higher level of collaboration.”

Recall that AFRICOM was incubated by EUCOM and that Admiral Stavridis is commander-in-chief of EUCOM and NATO military forces in Europe alike and as such was in charge of Operation Unified Protector from March 23 to October 31 of last year.

Ham also stated that Europe is, “both through NATO and through the European Union,” as paraphrased by American Forces Press Service, “heavily invested in security matters in Africa.” In his own language, “it is our strong relationship and partnership with U.S. European Command that allows us to have access and meaningful dialogue in the planning and coordination of those activities.”

Speaking alongside Ham, Stavridis reinforced the former’s position that AFRICOM and EUCOM remain inextricably linked, as EUCOM supplies AFRICOM with practically all his personnel and equipment (in many cases joint NATO assets) as well sharing headquarters in Stuttgart, Germany with it.

He mentioned in particular that the two Pentagon commands “shared nautical component commanders” and engaged in unison in “anti-piracy” naval operations in the Mediterranean Sea and off the Horn of Africa as well as in Africa’s oil-rich Gulf of Guinea, though the admiral was discreet enough not to offer the above details.

In addition he stated:

“We are also exploring ways that we can create efficiencies in intelligence and information sharing. And I believe we essentially share intelligence facilities now, and there may be some ways to do even more of that.”

Earlier this year Stavridis, in speaking of expanding NATO cooperation around the world, including for the first time “exploring possibilities with...India and Brazil,” recommended Libya as a candidate for NATO’s Mediterranean Dialogue military partnership, which includes every North African nation except that country – Egypt, Tunisia, Morocco and Algeria – stating:

“Today, the Mediterranean Dialogue, we’re in the process of talking, for example, with Libya. Already many of the other nations in General Ham’s [AFRICOM’s] region are part of this. The nations around the Mediterranean are natural NATO partners.”

After the murder of Libyan leader Muammar Gaddafi last October, Agence France-Presse cited U.S. ambassador to NATO Ivo Daalder urging that “Libya could bolster its ties with the transatlantic alliance by joining NATO’s Mediterranean Dialogue, a partnership comprising Morocco, Egypt, Tunisia, Algeria, Mauritania, Jordan and Israel.”

At a two-day meeting of NATO foreign ministers last December, “several NATO officials and spokespersons expressed interest in Libya joining the Mediterranean Dialogue,” according to a report in the Tripoli Post.

The statement issued by the ministerial included this initiative:

“Significant political developments have taken place this year in North Africa and the Middle East. Against this background and in accordance with our partnership policy, we have agreed to further deepen our political dialogue and practical cooperation with members of the Mediterranean Dialogue and the Istanbul Cooperation Initiative.. .We stand ready to consider, on a case-by-case basis, new requests from countries in these regions, including Libya, for partnership and cooperation with Nato, taking into account that the Mediterranean Dialogue and the Istanbul Cooperation Initiative are natural frameworks for such requests.”

U.S. Central Command and NATO are greedily eyeing Syria and Lebanon as their next military client states, as the next Mediterranean Dialogue cohorts after Libya, which will leave the entire Mediterranean region a NATO sea except for Cyprus [2] and Gaza [3], which will become the final acquisitions.

The absorption of Libya with Syria to follow would be entirely in keeping with the pattern NATO has established of militarily integrating nations it has attacked and brought about “regime change” in over the past seventeen years.

Bosnia is a NATO partner being prepared for the bloc’s Membership Action Plan, the final stage before full membership in the alliance. After the 78-day NATO air war against it in 1999, the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia disintegrated into three entities: Serbia, Montenegro and Kosovo. The last has been referred to by a former Serbian president and prime minister as the world’s first NATO state.

In 2009, only three years after it became independent, NATO offered Montenegro a Membership Action Plan. Serbia was brought into NATO’s Partnership for Peace program in 2006 and hosts a NATO military liaison office. Bosnia and Montenegro are supplying NATO with troops for the war in Afghanistan. Bosnian troops also served under the NATO-supported Multinational Division Central-South in Iraq.

This year NATO announced that Afghanistan and Iraq are members of a new military program, partners across the globe.

Nations bombed and occupied by the Western military organization are tapped for bases and troops to be used in wars against the next victims of aggression.

In regards to Africa, the offensive by the axis of AFRICOM, EUCOM, NATO and the European Union, with assistance from the Arab monarchies, to resubjugate the continent by returning it to the conditions of a century ago is well underway.

1)

Pentagon's Last Frontier: Battle-Hardened Troops Headed To Africa

Stop NATO

June 12, 2012

<http://rickrozoff.wordpress.com/2012/06/12/pentagons-last-frontier-battle-hardened-troops-headed-to-africa/>

2)

Cyprus: U.S. To Dominate All Europe, Mediterranean Through NATO

Stop NATO

March 3, 2011

<http://rickrozoff.wordpress.com/2011/03/03/cyprus-u-s-to-dominate-all-europe-mediterranean-through-nato/>

3)

Chicago Summit: NATO To Complete Domination Of Arab World

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April 18, 2012

<http://rickrozoff.wordpress.com/2012/04/18/chicago-summit-nato-to-complete-domination-of-arab-world/>

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