

# Militarization of Strategic Oil Reserves: Amid Africa's oil boom, U.S. binds ties

By [Global Research](#)

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Freetown, Sierra Leone — Potentially major oil strikes announced by an American-led consortium and a British company in West Africa have bolstered the region's reputation as the world's hottest energy zone.

It has also become the focus of the U.S. military's global mission to protect America's energy supplies, a development that critics fear will trigger more trouble than it will prevent.

The Texas-based Anadarko Petroleum Corp. said Wednesday its deepwater Venus 1B well off the coast of Sierra Leone had hit paydirt and formed one of two "bookends" 700 miles apart across two prospective basins that extend into waters controlled by Liberia, Cote d'Ivoire and Ghana.

These could each contain 150 million to 1 billion barrels of oil, according to Anadarko's CEO Al Walker.

One of Anadarko's consortium partners, Tullow Oil of Britain, which has a vast array of licenses in Africa, recently announced a new potentially important discovery in its Ngassa field in Uganda.

By 2025, the United States is expected to be importing about one-fifth of its oil from West Africa. That makes the region strategically important to the United States.

In the scramble for new oil reserves as the planet's older fields become depleted, the U.S. military has become a predominant force in U.S.-African relations.

Witness the 2008 inauguration of the U.S. military's latest command, Africa Command, or Africom, launched a year earlier in February 2007 by the [George W. Bush](#) administration, for whom energy security was of paramount importance.

The Bush team insisted that Africom was intended to promote a humanitarian agenda, strengthen democracy in a continent noted for its tyrants and dictators, and improve economic growth. President [Barack Obama](#)'s administration endorsed that.

But many African see Africom's mission in more menacing terms: ensuring that the United States gets most of Africa's oil, not China or India, which need it to fuel their burgeoning economies.

"While Obama administration officials insist that U.S. policy toward Africa is not being

militarized, the evidence seems to suggest otherwise,” says Gerald LeMelle, executive director of Africa Action, a non-governmental organization.

LeMelle and other Africom critics argue that the new command — which is headquartered in Frankfurt, Germany because no African government will give it a home — will only serve to keep dictators like the widely shunned President Teodoro Obiang Nguema of Equatorial Guinea, who overthrew his uncle in a 1979 military coup, in power.

Obama vowed that he would rid the United States of the “tyranny of oil” by developing alternative sources of energy when he got to the White House in January.

But Michael T. Klare, a U.S. energy specialist and professor of peace and world security studies at Hampshire College, argues that in the years ahead the United States, as well as Europe, will condemn millions of people to the tyranny of dictators.

The United States, he said, “will remain dependent on oil derived from authoritarian regimes, weak states and nations in the midst of civil war.”

That pretty much covers Africa as it is today.

This process of militarizing the energy business, and supporting unsavory regimes, began with the enunciation of the Carter Doctrine by President [Jimmy Carter](#) in his State of the Union address on Jan. 23, 1980, soon after the Islamic revolution triumphed in Iran and the Soviets invaded Afghanistan.

This principle, endorsed and even expanded by successive presidents, stated that the United States would use military force against any power that threatened its access to Middle Eastern oil.

That, Klare said in a January 2009 analysis, “led to U.S. involvement in three major wars and now risks further military entanglement in the greater Gulf area.”

“The U.S. military has come to serve as a global oil protection service, guarding pipelines, refineries and loading facilities in the Middle East and elsewhere,” he said in a 2008 analysis.

According to an estimate by the conservative U.S. National Defense Council Foundation, “The ‘protection’ of Persian Gulf oil alone costs the U.S. Treasury \$138 billion a year — up from \$49 billion just before the invasion of Iraq,” Klare says.

Far from protecting U.S. energy supplies, he argues, this doctrine “to protect foreign oil supplies is likely to create anything but ‘security.’ It can, in fact, trigger violent ‘blowback’ against the United States. ... If anything, this spiral of militarized insecurity is worsening.”

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