

USAFRICOM, An Instrument of “Imperialist Peace-Keeping” in sub-Saharan Africa

African Union Standby Force Conducts Military Exercises in South Africa

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Funding from the imperialist states will inevitably prevent genuine peace and security

A military exercise by 5,400 troops from various African Union (AU) member-states in South Africa is aimed at the creation of a continental-wide African Standby Force (ASF) designed to engage in peacekeeping and stabilization projects.

A preparation process began in late October and continued through the first week of November in the Northern Cape at Lohatla.

This peacekeeping force was mandated by the AU for the purpose of deployment in states during civil wars and other forms of instability in order to eliminate the rationale for western intervention into Africa’s internal affairs.

In the Southern Times published in Namibia described the military exercise as Amani Africa II, which in the previous year involved numerous countries along with the United States Africa Command (AFRICOM) and other NATO troops.

This report says

“The troops are being drilled to be part of the new 25,000-strong multinational force, which will be mandated to intervene in African countries rocked by genocide, crimes against humanity or war crimes. It is expected to be fully operational by early 2016. The force will be made up of five brigades formed by Africa’s economic groupings including the Economic Community of West Africa States (ECOWAS), East African Community (EAC), North African Regional Capability (NARC), Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS) and Southern African Development Community (SADC). Its logistics headquarters will be located in the Cameroon city of Douala after an agreement was signed to that effect last week.” (Oct. 26)

These efforts require a tremendous amount of financial and material resources. In addition, defining which states are in need of intervention, and under what circumstances, will without a doubt, become a highly politicized process.

The Southern Times in the same above-mentioned report notes “Africa’s evolving security challenges have further inspired the urgency for the operational readiness of the ASF and Rapid Deployment Capacity (RDC). Although the continent has witnessed a steady decline in the number of armed conflicts and intra-state conflicts, transnational security threats such as terrorist attacks from militant groups like Boko Haram have persisted in some parts of

the continent.”

Post-independence Legacy of International Intervention

Such stabilization and peacekeeping efforts have been taking place in Africa since 1960 with mixed results. Many of the armed forces that have been sent into these troubled states have originated from the same regions within the continent, while others have been more broad-based.

After the independence of the former Belgian Congo on June 30, 1960, the paramilitary Force Publique, that was trained and led by colonial authorities, mutinied leading to a breakdown of social order. The newly-elected Prime Minister Patrice Lumumba appealed to the United Nations to deploy a peacekeeping force which proved to be a disaster for the country and its revolutionary leader.

With the assistance of the UN force, Lumumba was overthrown, placed under house arrest, and denied access to the media, eventually resulting in his kidnapping and assassination at the aegis of several imperialist governments including Belgium, the U.S. and Britain. Congo was plunged into decades of division and instability although the exploitation of mineral resources inside the country reaped billions in profits for the multi-national corporations.

Other peacekeeping efforts have enjoyed success such as the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) interventions in Liberia and Sierra Leone during the late 1990s and early 2000s, which after years of setbacks brought about some semblance of stability in these states.

In the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) during 1998-2003, the Southern African Development Community (SADC) sent thousands of troops from Zimbabwe, Angola and Namibia halting a U.S.-backed invasion by the armed forces of Uganda and Rwanda aimed at overthrowing the government of Joseph and later Laurent Kabila.

The Role of the Imperialist States in Peacekeeping Operations

Nonetheless, there are political problems associated with the plans to establish an African Standby Force due to the fact that the most serious interventions today revolve around the role of the United States Africa Command (AFRICOM). It was AFRICOM which led the destabilization and bombing campaign that destroyed Libya fostering instability throughout North and West Africa.

Since the war of regime-change against Libya, the imperialist scheme to institute a neo-colonial client-regime has created the major source for human trafficking internationally. Hundreds of thousands of people are smuggled through Libya and across the Mediterranean which has resulted in over 2,000 deaths just this year alone, with no end in sight.

The acquisition and budgeting of financial resources for the ASF is also a major issue with declining prices for export commodities from Africa resulting in a myriad of economic, political and social problems. Even states such as Nigeria and Ghana which have been hailed for their phenomenal growth over the last few years are now facing industrial actions over non-payment of salaries, inflation due to in part to declining currency values as well as growing class divisions.

Funding and logistical support from the imperialist states would immediately compromise the political character of the ASF creating the potential for the military units of becoming a surrogate army for the Pentagon and NATO. Numerous western research centers, think-tanks and periodicals have highlighted the central role of the former colonial and neo-colonial countries as the primary source for funding of the continental military command.

According to Reuters, “Since 2004, the European Union has committed more than 1.3 billion euros to African peace operations, including 225 million euros in 2014 for missions to Somalia, the Central African Republic and Mali. In all, more than 90 percent of AU peace and security efforts are funded by the likes of the EU and United States, although AU member states have pledged to provide a quarter of the funding for operations by 2020.” (Oct. 29)

Consequently, these funding sources would automatically have a determining role in which countries are targeted for intervention. For example, with Pentagon-NATO-EU funding would these entities support an effort by the ASF to come to the assistance of a state or group being attacked by imperialist interests, such as in Libya and Ivory Coast during 2011?

Even Reuters stressed that “Underlining the problem, the EU is even bankrolling this month’s exercises, casting a shadow over the ‘African solutions for African problems’ mantra espoused by politicians in national capitals and the AU headquarters in Addis Ababa. ‘The external support for defense spending in Africa is, in my view, a major foreign policy handicap,’ said David Anderson, professor of African history at Britain’s University of Warwick.” (Oct. 29)

Anderson went on to say “African states will truly own their defense and security when they pay for it themselves. There is no greater marker of sovereignty and independence than security and defense.”

This approach to continental military cooperation is a departure from what Dr. Kwame Nkrumah, the first president of the Republic of Ghana, envisioned when he advanced the idea in 1960 amid the Congo crisis. In his book entitled “Africa Must Unite” published in 1963, Nkrumah emphasized that any African military force must be independent of NATO and its allies.

A continuation of this idea was supported by the Col. Muammar Gaddafi, the former leader of Libya, who hosted the Sirte conference of the Organization of African Unity (OAU), the predecessor of the AU in 1999. The Sirte Declaration drafted at the conference called for the formation of the ASF when the AU was formally initiated in 2002.

Both Nkrumah and Gaddafi were overthrown at the instigation and coordination of Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) working at the behest of imperialism. Nonetheless, their formulations were correct and only when Africa can establish its own independent military force will there be any hope for genuine peace and stability on the continent.

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