

## AFRICOM Military Alliance: Masters, not Friends

In a recent meeting between President Buhari and the US secretary of State Anthony Blinken, the former called on the latter to assist Nigeria and the African sub-region with security challenges by relocating AFRICOM from Stuttgart, Germany to the continent proper. In all likelihood that is a bad idea Mr. President and this is why. AFRICOM, short for Africa Command, is one of America's 6 unified geographic combatant commands within the United States Department of Defense unified command structure. It is one of the latest command structure formed in 2007 since last year in 2020 the Space Command was formally established. The others are US Europe Command (EUCOM est. 1947) which covers Europe + Russia, US Pacific Command (PACOM est. 1947, renamed INDOPACOM in 2018), covering The Pacific Area, US Southern Command (SOUTHCOM est. 1963) for South America, US Central Command (CENTCOM est. 1983) for the Middle East. + Egypt, US Northern Command (NORTHCOM est. 2002) after the Sept 11 strikes.

Ostensibly AFRICOM '*counters transnational threats and malign actors, strengthens security forces and responds to crises in order to advance U.S. national interests and promote regional security, stability and prosperity*' according to their mission statement on [africom.mil](http://africom.mil). Boilerplate stuff. What is the real purpose of AFRICOM? After WWII, the decline of Britain as the world power allowed America to emerge and replace it as the super-spreader of global Capitalism. Then after the fall of Communism and the Soviet Union in 1989 American foreign policy changed from ideological confrontation to outright colonization of worldwide resources. To maintain this global grip, the US has over 800 military bases dotted around the world to project power and to secure and control energy resources. As CENTCOM was deployed to create dominance of Middle Eastern energy sources for the US via the Gulf Wars, AFRICOM was similarly designed to secure Africa's energy reserves amongst other objectives. Multiple reports in the early 2000's pointed to the importance of Africa's energy resources. From The National Energy Policy Report issued by the Office of then Vice President Richard Cheney on May 16, 2001 to the 2005 Center for Strategic and International Studies' Task Force on Gulf of Guinea Security report, the US has maintained a consistent approach to her Africa policy – secure and control African energy resources.

The additional purpose of AFRICOM is to counter China's Africa policy. AFRICOM emerged as a direct consequence of increased Chinese presence on the continent. The Chinese organised *Forum on China-Africa Cooperation (FOCAC)* meeting in October 2006 set off alarm bells in Washington when the Chinese President at the time, Hu Jintao, hosted a Beijing summit which brought nearly fifty African heads of state and ministers to the Chinese capital. Since then China has been making political and economic inroads into Africa while the US tries to counteract it. Trade between Africa and China has more than trebled since 2006, passing US\$166 billion in 2011. It currently stands at \$187 billion for 2020 (after a high of \$200bill in 2019). Like his predecessors before him – Hillary Clinton in 2012 and Pompeo – Blinken lectured Africans to be cautious of China's Africa policy at the Tuesday 27 April virtual meeting.

Buhari should note that most Africans didn't look too favorably on the idea of AFRICOM basing itself on the continent when the US started shopping around for a host-country. In 2007 the heads of state of the Southern African Development Community (SADC), whose members include Angola, Botswana, Mozambique, South Africa, Tanzania, and Zimbabwe, discussed AFRICOM and concluded dryly 'that it is better if the United States were involved with Africa from a distance rather than be present on the continent'. The twenty-five-member Community of Sahel-Saharan States (Cen-Sad) asserted that it 'flatly refuses the installation of any military command or any foreign armed presence of whatever country on any part of Africa, whatever the reasons and justifications'. Nigeria dismissed and rejected the idea

