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*CONGRESSIONAL TESTIMONY*

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**Making the Most of U.S. Military  
Assistance in the Democratic  
Republic of the Congo**

**Testimony before the  
Committee on Armed Services  
United States House of Representatives**

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My name is James Jay Carafano. I am the Vice President of Foreign Policy and Defense Studies and the Director of the Kathryn and Shelby Cullom Davis Institute for International Studies at The Heritage Foundation. The views I express in this testimony are my own, and should not be construed as representing any official position of The Heritage Foundation.

Thank you for the opportunity to appear before the committee today. The United States has important interests to safeguard in Central Africa. Those interests can best be served by being a constructive force for peace, stability, and economic freedom in the region.

What I would caution against, however, is the bigger Band-Aid approach—just doing a little more to show we care. Throwing “more” at the challenges in Central Africa might satisfy the compulsion of the free world to do “something,” but that is more about making us feel good about ourselves—not making the most effective use of U.S. power to achieve the greatest good. Certainly, much can be done to build a “better” Band-Aid and more efficiently apply assistance, but the most vital role U.S. power can play is in its broader mission of advancing policies to keep America and its friends and allies safe, free, and prosperous.

In particular, U.S. military assistance in the Democratic Republic of the Congo should remain limited. It would take a great deal more U.S. military assistance to have a very significant impact—and an intrusive American presence on that level would create as many problems, if not more, than it might potentially solve. Rather, across the Middle East and North Africa U.S. military assets must remain focused on deterring large-scale conventional conflict and supporting efforts to counter an enduring global Islamist insurgency that includes a serious transnational terrorist threat. Indeed, in meeting these missions there is much more that should and must be done to make the U.S. military presence more effective.

Further, as you know, the U.S. draws forces globally to respond to military needs wherever they are in the world. My assessment is that current and projected funding for defense will be inadequate to meet the armed forces’ global responsibilities. Readiness and capabilities will decline. This will exacerbate the challenges of the U.S. military remaining a constructive force in Africa—for two reasons. First, when budgets get tight the low-cost, high-impact military programs that can make a difference on the margin, particularly when they are well integrated into an effective package of assistance, are usually the first to be cut. Second, the decline in U.S. military power will contribute to increasing instability in the Middle East and North Africa and the ripple of these troubles will carry them further south.

In my testimony today, I would like to 1) review the current security situation in the region; 2) make the case that pouring more resources into the current strategy won’t work. The United States should reassess its support for the current United Nations peacekeeping mission, increase accountability for the inept government in Kinshasa in addition to Rwanda and Uganda, and emphasize the need for an African-led strategy; 3)

outline the appropriate direct role of U.S. military assistance; and 4) outline the challenges the U.S. military faces in meeting these responsibilities and suggest substantive reforms in addressing regional issues.

## **What We Do**

My responsibilities at The Heritage Foundation comprise supervising all of the foundation's research on public policy concerning foreign policy and national security. Over the past decade, we have assembled a robust, talented, and dedicated research team. I have the honor and privilege of leading that team. Our research is non-partisan and it is all freely available on the Heritage Web site at [heritage.org](http://heritage.org).

In recent years, we have recognized that U.S. policy towards Africa—in particular advancing economic, political, and religious freedoms as well as improving public safety—has become particularly important. The Heritage Foundation was the first think tank to make a compelling case for establishing the U.S. Africa Command. We argued this should be done to “provide American political leaders with more thoughtful, informed military advice based on an in-depth knowledge of the region and continuous planning and intelligence assessments [so that] better situational awareness of military-political developments could preclude the need for intervention or limit the prospects for engaging in open-ended or unsound military operations.”<sup>1</sup> The right American military strategy is not more U.S. military in Africa, but making the U.S. military presence more effective—in particular helping to set the environment for advancements in public safety, civil society, and economic freedom.

Since then Heritage analysts have studied and written authoritatively on regional issues regarding security, economic freedom, counterterrorism, and peace and reconciliation. I am particularly proud of our Africa Working Group, chaired by Heritage Researcher Morgan Roach. This forum brings together a diverse assembly of policymakers and thought leaders to discuss the region's most challenging issues in a non-attribution setting. These discussions have not only greatly benefited our research agenda, but they have been an important catalyst for fresh thinking on how to make the most of the U.S. presence in the region.

In short, our research agenda on Africa reflects the foundation's commitment to advancing public policies that enhance our security; encourage economic growth by promoting the legitimate exchange of goods, peoples, services, and ideas among free nations; and foster a free and open civil society—all at the same time.

## **Where We Are**

The Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) has a long history of instability, poor governance, and poverty. No one can credibly argue that things are getting better. A

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<sup>1</sup> James Jay Carafano and Nile Gardiner, “U.S. Military Assistance for Africa: A Better Solution,” Heritage Foundation *Backgrounder* No. 1697, October 15, 2003, <http://www.heritage.org/research/reports/2003/10/us-military-assistance-for-africa-a-better-solution>.

continuous U.N. peacekeeping presence for over a decade, billions of dollars in economic and humanitarian assistance, and ongoing diplomatic efforts have not averted the current crisis. For example, the Congrès National pour la Defense du Peuple (CNDP), one of the most prominent rebel groups in the country, officially disbanded in 2009 but re-hatted under the new designation “M23” in reference to the March 23, 2009, peace agreement. In November, during M23’s attack on Goma, numerous media accounts reported that U.N. peacekeepers from the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO) quickly retreated when the Congolese army, the Forces Armées de la République Démocratique du Congo (FARDC), fled, abandoning civilians to the M23 rebels.<sup>2</sup> This incident casts serious doubts on the competence of MONUSCO and efforts to improve the capacity of the Congolese military.

Further, there is a lack of government structure upon which to build effective security capacity, let alone civil institutions and economic opportunity. The government has used violence, corruption, and cronyism to maintain power. The November 2011 election was ridden with irregularities and targeted violence against the opposition. Government resources are awarded to bolster loyalty, not address needs or development.

## **What We Can Do**

Building a better Band-Aid has to start by stopping policies that are not working.<sup>3</sup> For starters, the U.S. should increase accountability for the inept government in Kinshasa. The federal government is an impediment to stability because President Joseph Kabila and his government cannot deliver on their commitments. Yet, there are no legitimate local representatives to fill the void. The U.S. should press President Kabila to decentralize authority and transfer power away from Kinshasa to the provincial and local governments. Provincial and local elections should be scheduled to replace officials that were undemocratically handpicked by Kabila.

Next, press Uganda and Rwanda to be part of the solution. The US should implement sanctions on those shown to support activities that contribute to instability in the DRC. However, changing the role of Rwanda and Uganda requires more than the threat of sanctions, Rwanda and Uganda need to see that their concerns – economic and security – will be addressed through a regional strategy.

For instance, many argue that Rwanda and Uganda’s contribution to instability in the DRC is directly linked to the DRC’s mineral wealth. Rwanda and Uganda have much to

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<sup>2</sup> Jessica Hatcher and Alex Perry, “Defining Peacekeeping Downward: The U.N. Debacle in Eastern Congo,” *Time*, November 26, 2012, <http://world.time.com/2012/11/26/defining-peacekeeping-downward-the-u-n-debacle-in-eastern-congo/> (accessed December 13, 2012) and Gaaki Kigambo, “MONUSCO in the Spotlight over ‘Failed Mandate,’” *The East African* December 1, 2012, <http://www.theeastafrican.co.ke/news/Monusco-in-the-spotlight-over-failed-mandate/-/2558/1634400/-/jukbso/-/index.html> (accessed December 13, 2012).

<sup>3</sup> Portions of this section are adapted from Morgan Lorraine Roach and Brett D. Schaefer, “A Fundamental Rethink Is Needed on the Democratic Republic of the Congo,” Heritage Foundation *Issue Brief*, December 18, 2012.

gain from a stable eastern DRC, particularly one with greater autonomy, that would be open to trade and investment. Following the decentralization of governance, provincial leadership should be granted the authority to forge economic ties with neighbors.

Finally, the country needs to transition towards a different security framework. It is time to take steps to sharply diminish the size of MONUSCO, circumscribe its mandate, and establish a framework for terminating the mission. Peace can best be built with participation by regional stakeholders. The African Union Security Council has pledged its support towards the deployment of a Neutral International Force in Eastern Congo.<sup>4</sup> Such a peacekeeping mission should ideally be led by a contingent not directly related to the conflict, but should allow for Rwandan and Ugandan participation to enable those governments to directly observe the situation to alleviate their concerns.

## **What the U.S. Military Can Do**

The most constructive role for the U.S. military is through the security-capacity–building programs managed by U.S. Africa Command working through those countries and stakeholders willing to help bring peace and security to the people of the DRC. These should include the traditional tools employed by the command, including International Military Education and Training (IMET), Foreign Military Sales and Financing, multilateral exercises, and training engagements conducted by small teams led by our Army, Navy, Air Force, Marine and Special Operations Components, which General Carter Ham described as being conducted “at a low cost and with a small footprint.”<sup>5</sup> Further, the command should continue to work to ensure that its efforts are synchronized with the rest of the government team, initiatives by independent agencies such as the United States Institute of Peace, and private sector and non-governmental organization initiatives.

What this committee should be concerned about is the adequacy and sustainability of these programs. When General Ham testified before this committee in February, for example, he made only one brief reference in his prepared statement to the DRC and security challenges in the Great Lakes Region of Africa, principally referring to combating the remnants of the Lord’s Resistance Army. Further, in Secretary Panetta’s most recent Defense Strategic Guidance issued in January 2012, entitled “Sustaining U.S. Global Leadership: Priorities for 21st Century Defense,” the word “Africa” is only mentioned once in the whole 16-page document. That has to be a concern, coming from a document which purports to give the U.S. Armed Forces and the civilians supporting them the Defense Secretary’s broad vision and policy priorities.<sup>6</sup> I see neither document reflecting a recognition of the importance of appropriate military engagement activities,

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<sup>4</sup>Frank Kanyesigye, “Congo-Kinshasa: AU Commends Regional Efforts on Congo,” *The New Times*, December 13, 2012, [http://allafrica.com/stories/201212130054.html?cid=nlc-dailybrief-daily\\_news\\_brief-link17-20121213](http://allafrica.com/stories/201212130054.html?cid=nlc-dailybrief-daily_news_brief-link17-20121213) (accessed December 13, 2012).

<sup>5</sup>General Carter Ham statement before the House Armed Services Committee, February 29, 2012, p. 15, <http://www.africom.mil/fetchBinary.asp?pdfID=20120301102747> (accessed December 18, 2012).

<sup>6</sup>[http://www.defense.gov/news/defense\\_strategic\\_guidance.pdf](http://www.defense.gov/news/defense_strategic_guidance.pdf)

but rather reflecting the resource squeeze that is increasingly not leaving the armed forces the capacity to cover all its responsibilities to protect U.S. interests.

## **What Needs to Change**

Beyond the immediate tasks of assisting in addressing regional security issues, the committee must be concerned about the adequacy of U.S. forces to play a construct role in advancing peace and security throughout the region from the northernmost regions of the Near East through Central Africa.

The administration's Quadrennial Defense Review underestimated global force and modernization requirements and, in particular, the requirements for forces to promote stability in the region.<sup>7</sup> The President's 2011 Strategic Guidance only exacerbated the mismatch between missions and capabilities. Put simply, Washington is taking a peace dividend on an account that is overdrawn. This has to stop.

How U.S. forces are applied needs rethinking as well. The most urgent priority is U.S. counterterrorism strategy which is overly focused on targeting the leadership of transnational terrorist groups rather than being structured to engage with and defeat a global Islamist insurgency which sees its path to power through attacking the freedom, prosperity, and security of the U.S. and its friends and allies.<sup>8</sup>

## **Next Steps**

The situation in the DRC and the capacity to influence it reflects the reality that America is at the tipping point in its capacity to defend our interests around the world. There are steps that the U.S. military should take, in concert with a more responsible and comprehensive regional strategy, but the confidence that that will happen in the long term is in grave doubt, because of the lack of overall military capacity.

For starters, Congress should demand an independent review of the upcoming Quadrennial Defense Review. Further, Congress must have better assessments of readiness and capabilities to conduct assistance and engagement missions. The Congress needs a "canary in the mine shaft" so it know when the resources to undertake the urgent are crowding investments to undertake the important.

Thank you for the opportunity to speak today on this important issue. I look forward to your questions.

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<sup>7</sup> The Heritage Foundation, "A Strong National Defense: The Armed Forces America Needs and What They Will Cost," Heritage Foundation *Special Report* No. 90, April 5, 2011, <http://www.heritage.org/research/reports/2011/04/a-strong-national-defense-the-armed-forces-america-needs-and-what-they-will-cost>

<sup>8</sup> The Heritage Foundation Counterterrorism Task Force, "Counterterrorism Strategy for the Next Wave," Heritage Foundation *Special Report* No. 98, August 24, 2011, <http://www.heritage.org/research/reports/2011/08/a-counterterrorism-strategy-for-the-next-wave>

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