

# US Army Africa: Smart Power in Action

Stephen J. Mariano and Charles B. O'Brien

*"We must use what has been called smart power – the full range of tools at our disposal. With smart power, diplomacy will be the vanguard of foreign policy."*

- Hillary Clinton, US Secretary of State Nominee, 13 January 2009

### Smart Power Defined

Secretary of State Clinton's use of the term "Smart Power" has stirred the proverbial pundit pot. A surge of talk show commentaries, opinion-editorials, and blog spots have questioned the wisdom of smart power, some going so far as to calling the idea "just plain dumb."<sup>1</sup> Secretary Clinton's evocation of the "full range" of power tools was likely informed by a Center for Strategic and International Studies commission study headed by Richard Armitage and Joseph Nye. They reported that smart power is,

"...neither hard nor soft—it is the skillful combination of both. Smart power means developing an integrated strategy, resource base and tool kit to achieve American objectives, drawing on both hard and soft power. It is an approach that underscores the necessity of a strong military, but also invests heavily in alliances, partnerships and institutions at all levels to expand American influence and establish the legitimacy of American actions."<sup>2</sup>

Professors may define and debate smart power but the Nation's civilian and military leaders must develop security policies and employment concepts. The Obama administration, for example, has an objective to "Rebuild the Military for 21<sup>st</sup> Century Tasks." His administration wants to:

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<sup>1</sup> See for example, Roger Cohen, "Magic and Realism," *The New York Times*, Opinion-Editorial, 14 January 2009, <http://www.nytimes.com/2009/01/15/opinion/15cohen.html?ref=opinion>; and Stephen Clark, "Clinton's 'Smart Power' Slogan Is Just Plain Dumb, Branding Experts Say," *Fox News On-line*, 22 January 09, <http://www.foxnews.com/politics/2009/01/22/clintons-smart-power-diplomacy-misfires-branding-experts-say/>; accessed 7 February 2009.

<sup>2</sup> Richard L. Armitage and Joseph S. Nye Jr., co-chairs, Carola McGiffert and Craig Cohen, contributors, "A Smarter, More Secure America," CSIS Commission on Smart Power, Washington DC, 6 November 2007, p. 7; <http://www.csis.org/smarterpower/>, accessed 7 February 2009

“...build up our special operations forces, civil affairs, information operations, and other units and capabilities that remain in chronic short supply; invest in foreign language training, cultural awareness, and human intelligence and other needed counterinsurgency and stabilization skill sets; and create a more robust capacity to train, equip, and advise foreign security forces, so that local allies are better prepared to confront mutual threats.”<sup>3</sup>

Charting a course that implements the administration’s notion of smart power will not be easy. The military must conceptualize its role in a smart power policy. Hard power is commonly associated with the military instrument but even hard power can be applied in softer ways to generate smart power. Strengthening a weak foreign military’s capability or conducting foreign humanitarian assistance are examples of soft application of hard military power. The Department of Defense must further develop other smart power concepts.

### **Diplomacy, Development, Defense: the Three Ds**

*“...we view defense, diplomacy, and development as the three pillars of American foreign policy. That’s not rhetoric. That is our commitment. That is how we are proceeding. It was significant that the President and Vice President came down on my first day and their second day in office to reinforce that message.”*

- Hillary Clinton, US Secretary of State, 27 January 2009

Efforts to integrate defense, diplomatic and development programs, the so-called 3D approach, have slowly gained institutional traction over the past several years. At the national level, the recent publication of the *U.S. Government Counterinsurgency Guide*, signed by the big three themselves - Secretary of State, Secretary of Defense and US Agency for International Development (USAID) Administrator - is a sharp example of a 3D doctrinal advancement. The corps of deployable civilian advisors being developed by the State Department’s Office of the Coordinator for Reconstruction and Stabilization to accompany military personnel in crisis is an example of creative human resource management. At the regional level, the creation of US Africa Command is an example of organizational 3D innovation.

### **Africa and the 3Ds**

*“We must focus our energies beyond the guns and steel of the military, beyond just our brave soldiers, sailors, Marines, and airmen. We must also focus our energies on the other elements of national power that will be so crucial in the years to come.”*

- Robert Gates, US Secretary of Defense, 26 November 2007

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<sup>3</sup> Obama administration, *The Agenda*, <http://www.whitehouse.gov/agenda/>, accessed 9 February 2009

The US recognized the need for a different type of organization to deal with an array of problems in Africa. Consequently, US Africa Command was created in 2007 as the Department of Defense response to the whole-of-government approach. The command puts diplomatic and development coordination alongside defense planning, programs and activities: a novel implementation of the 3D approach. Ambassador Mary Yates, Deputy to the Commander for Civil-Military Affairs, says "US Africa Command's foremost mission is to help our African partners achieve their own security, and to support America's diplomatic and developmental efforts in Africa." This geographic combatant command was intended to be unique due to its increased ratio of civilians to military on staff; by its use of Ambassador Yates, a career Foreign Service Officer, as one of two principle deputies; and by its emphasis on theater security cooperation activities – actions taken to forestall crises rather than react to them – over traditional warfighting capabilities.

### **Building Partner Capacity: Security Assistance and Cooperation**

*“Challenges do lie ahead, but there are also great opportunities to help build partner capacity and support developmental efforts. US Africa Command will continue to seek advice and feedback on how to best turn these opportunities into successes toward a stable and more secure African continent.*

- GEN William Ward, Commander, US Africa Command, 17 October 2008

As the US government's lead for overall Foreign Policy, the State Department has an array of assistance programs which complement defense and development programs. Foreign Military Sales, Foreign Military Financing, and International Military Education and Training are three tools in the State Department's tool box. In Africa, State Department programs have traditionally struggled to compete for resources and the Defense Department's activity has been perpetually episodic. Consequently, the opportunity to synchronize State and Defense activities has been limited to security assistance activities managed out of air-conditioned offices in capital cities rather than austere field environments. Without increased peacetime opportunities to practice a 3D approach outside the comfortable confines of an embassy compound, the Nation's ability to execute integrated, effective, real-world humanitarian assistance operations is in jeopardy.

Security cooperation is defined as the means by which the Department of Defense encourages and enables countries to work with the United States. It includes official, cooperative and general non-combat interactions.<sup>4</sup> Military organizations conduct security cooperation activities, as part of the range of military operations. These activities are intended to build institutional capacity within partner nation security structures so those nations can become self-sufficient, secure their populations, control their borders and contribute to regional peace. Security cooperation activities are also aimed at developing peacetime interoperability between US and partner forces so that in

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<sup>4</sup> Army Regulation 11-31, *Army International Security Cooperation Policy*, Headquarters, Department of the Army, Washington, D.C., 24 October 2007, p. 2

times of crisis, activities are executed effectively and efficiently. The US also conducts security cooperation to enhance relationships with partner nations and to gain dependable host nation support. Though sometimes misconstrued, routine military cooperation activities can evolve into relationships that help ensure the US can successfully assist regional partners in times of crisis. For example, US ability to position forces, equipment and supplies, or use ports, warehouses and airfields when planning and conducting crisis response operations could save time... and ultimately, lives.

### **The Country Team in 3D**

*“Expand our Diplomatic Presence: To make diplomacy a priority Obama and Biden will stop shuttering consulates and start opening them in difficult corners of the world -- particularly in Africa. They will expand our foreign service, and develop our civilian capacity to work alongside the military.”<sup>5</sup>*

-President Barack Obama, 20 January 2009

The 3D concept routinely manifests itself in US Embassy “country teams.” The country team, which is headed by the Ambassador, “is the senior in-country interagency coordinating body.”<sup>6</sup> In the 3D context, the country team includes the Ambassador, the Senior Development Advisor and what is now called the Senior Defense Official. Senior leaders from other government departments and agencies comprise the remainder of the country team.

At a lower level, the Embassy teams consist of defense, diplomacy and development officials. On the diplomatic side it may include the deputy chief of mission or a political/military counselor. On the development side, a senior USAID program manager may be required to represent the agency. On the defense side that means service attachés, chiefs of defense cooperation, security assistance officers or bi-lateral affairs officers.<sup>7</sup>

General William E. Ward, commander of US Africa Command, has described the military representatives in the country team as his ‘frontline troops’. These troops coordinate and integrate interagency security assistance and cooperation activities: equipment sales and transfer, financial support, exercise planning, military exchanges and international military education training programs.

In-country teams add incredible value in achieving US security policy objectives but in Africa, demand frequently exceeds supply. Circumstances vary of course, but nearly every Embassy team could use additional expertise and support, even if only on a semi-

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<sup>5</sup> Obama administration, *The Agenda*, <http://www.whitehouse.gov/agenda/>, accessed 9 February 2009

<sup>6</sup> Commander’s Handbook for the Joint Interagency Coordination Group, United States Joint Forces Command, Suffolk, VA, 1 March 2007, p. III-10

<sup>7</sup> Bi-lateral Affairs Officers (BAOs) are National Guard personnel on active duty assignment to the country teams as part of the State Partnership Program.

permanent basis.<sup>8</sup> Creating mobile, integrated field teams to conduct in-theater security cooperation activities long before crises emerge could provide the US a three-dimensional “institutional reserve.” These integrated field teams could be built roughly like a generic Provincial Reconstruction Team (PRT), though the analogy should not be overdrawn. There are nearly as many PRT constructs as there are PRTs.

An integrated field team could have membership not only from across the 3Ds but also include other “Ds”: US Departments of Agriculture, Commerce, Justice, Homeland Security and Treasury. Representatives from the Office of Foreign Disaster Assistance and Office of the Coordinator for Reconstruction and Stabilization could be key partners in facilitating US Army Africa’s crisis response function. International, regional and non-governmental organizations could also be given the option to embed members into integrated field teams. At the direction of the Ambassador, and in coordination with Embassy team, an integrated field team could help reform security sectors and build partner capacity, two functions demanding increased attention in the African environment.<sup>9</sup>

### **US Army in Africa: Interdependent at Birth**

*“We are honored and privileged to be the first members of US Army Africa...this is a huge responsibility, as our decisions and actions will establish the foundation that others will build upon in the years ahead.”<sup>10</sup>*

-MG William B. Garrett III, US Army Africa Commanding General, 9 December 2008

In December 2008, US Africa Command was gifted with its own Army Component. US Army Africa was established from the core of the Southern European Task Force (SETAF) and organizationally sits alongside components with Air Force, Navy, Marine and Special Operations expertise. The changing strategic environment and bold leadership decisions have given the command new responsibilities, mission, and focus as the Army component for US Africa Command. US Army Africa is America’s first and only All Army team dedicated to achieving positive change in Africa. To be successful, US Army Africa must work in concert with partners when conducting sustained security engagement with Africa land forces. Every activity must be focused on promoting peace, stability, and security in Africa. The headquarters must also be ready to deploy as a contingency headquarters in support of crisis response, to prevent crises from becoming catastrophes.

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<sup>8</sup> The additional military personnel must be value-added, however, and not just create increased support requirements on the existing Embassy staff. See *Foreign Service Journal*, March 2007, for more on this topic.

<sup>9</sup> For one variation on integrating interagency activity at a tactical or field level, see Bob Killebrew, “The Left-Side of the Spectrum: Ambassadors and Advisors in Future US Strategy,” *Center for a New American Security*, Washington D.C., June 2007; [http://www.cnas.org/files/documents/publications/Killebrew\\_AdvisorsinUSStrategy\\_June07.pdf](http://www.cnas.org/files/documents/publications/Killebrew_AdvisorsinUSStrategy_June07.pdf), accessed, 18 February 2009

<sup>10</sup> William B. Garrett III, transcript of keynote speech, US Army Africa Transformation Ceremony, 9 December 2008.

The command is relatively small, about 250 members, compared to over 1,000 found in some other Army component headquarters. It also has no assigned forces which decreases capability but increases agility. What US Army Africa lacks in organic capability, it must compensate with professional relationships. The command relies on partnerships with international, regional and non-governmental organizations and depends on direct support from “Big Army.” In this context, US Army Africa is said to be “interdependent at birth.”

### **Through, By, and With**

*“There are many challenges ahead. But one thing is certain: HOW we do WHAT we do will be our fate in Africa...Success will also require a more sophisticated awareness of African cultures, a deeper understanding of African perspectives, and a patient, long-term approach in which we may very well be the “junior partner” in a multinational, multiagency operation or security campaign.”<sup>11</sup>*

-MG William B. Garrett III, US Army Africa Commanding General, 9 December 2008

Just a few months ago, US Army Africa had only a few members with operational experience in Africa and little knowledge of Africa’s history, geography and security challenges. In an effort to improve institutional knowledge the command embarked on a deliberate training and education program. The US Air Force Special Operations Command organized a week long seminar on sub-Saharan Africa and the Naval Postgraduate School has added African modules to its excellent Leader Development and Education for Sustained Peace program on-line. Eventually, the Army will develop its own program, tailored specifically for US Army personnel joining the US Army Africa team or in an Army organization supporting the command.

This academic experience has been complemented by a surge of operational activities. Prior to December, few of the command’s members had stepped foot in Africa. Today, nearly all of US Army Africa’s primary staff officers and many of its junior officers and non-commissioned officers have participated in planning activities, staff talks, or exchange programs on the continent. Combining formal education and training with practical experience will be a key feature in maturing the command into the premier Army team dedicated to achieving positive change in Africa.

US Army Africa seeks a small role as a reliable partner in Africa. The command aims to deliver persistent security engagement capability as an antidote to chaos in an era of persistent conflict. Africans may see only one US Army soldier on a mission, but that soldier represents the strength of a million members of the active and reserve force. Every member of the team must work to renew “brand America” not only in words but also by deeds. How US Army soldiers and civilians do their jobs in Africa will determine the command’s fate.

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<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

US Army Africa transformation symbolizes America's enduring commitment to Africa. As it takes on new responsibilities, team members are guided by five foundational principles: *foster a favorable attitude* towards the US everywhere the US Army goes; *be team players* – go beyond cooperation to collaboration; *add value* to existing programs in Africa without disruption or confusion; *exemplify professionalism in all US Army actions* and promote the same in partners; *share experiences and learn lessons*. Missions in Africa will be complex and novel as situations change. US Army Africa we will learn and adapt quickly so the team can move forward boldly, not bureaucratically. Team members must balance hard and soft options, engagement and action, supported and supporting partner. And as every reader of SWJ knows, US Army Africa can succeed in this mission only when it works "through, by, and with" US Ambassadors and their country teams to assist our African friends and partners. This is US Army Africa – Smart Power in Action.

*Colonel Stephen J. Mariano is from Redlands, California. He was commissioned in 1986 as a Second Lieutenant in the Quartermaster Corps. Colonel Mariano's tactical experience includes platoon leader and company executive officer in a VII Corps Support Command unit in Augsburg, Germany as well as battalion/brigade staff and company command positions in the 7th Infantry Division (Light), Fort Ord, California. He served as Course Director and Assistant Professor of Military Strategy and Comparative Military Systems at the United States Military Academy, West Point, New York and as the Commandant's Executive Officer. In Stuttgart, Germany, he served as an exercise and engagement planner for US European Command, an operations officer after September 11th, 2001, and then as the Chief of the Coalition Planning Group for Counter Terrorism. In Brussels, Belgium, he served at the NATO Headquarters as a strategic planner on the International Military Staff, Plans & Policy Directorate. In Afghanistan, he served in OPERATION ENDURING FREEDOM as the Military Advisor to NATO's Senior Civilian Representative. Most recently he served in OPERATION IRAQI FREEDOM as the Multinational Security Transition Command-Iraq, Deputy J5, Chief of Strategy, Plans and Assessments*

*His military education includes the Quartermaster Officer basic and advanced courses, Command and General Staff College, the Armed Forces Staff College and the United States Army War College (USAWC) where he was the Visiting Defense Fellow at Queen's University in Kingston, Ontario, Canada. Colonel Mariano holds a Bachelor's Degree in Mathematics & Economics from the University of California, Santa Barbara and a Master's degree in National Security Affairs from the Naval Postgraduate School, Monterey, California. He is currently a doctoral candidate in War Studies at the Royal Military College of Canada. His military qualifications include Airborne, Ranger, and Air Assault courses. His awards include the Joint Meritorious Unit Award, the Bronze Star Medal, the Defense Meritorious Service Medal, the Meritorious Service Medal; he also received Combat Action Badge (2).*

*Colonel Mariano is currently the Assistant Chief of Staff, G5 (Strategic Plans, Policies & Assessments) for the United States Army Southern European Task Force/US Army Africa, Vicenza, Italy.*

*Major Charles O'Brien enlisted in the US Army in 1989. He was commissioned as a Second Lieutenant through the US Army Officer Candidate School in 1993. His military education includes: Armor Officer Basic Course, Infantry Officer Advanced Course, the Army Command and General Staff College, the School of Advanced Military Studies, and Defense Strategist Course. Major O'Brien earned a Bachelor of Business Administration from Columbus State University, a Master's Degree in Business Administration from Webster University, and a Master's Degree in Military Art and Science (Theater Operations/Advanced Military Studies) from the Command and General Staff College. His awards include the Bronze Star Medal (with "V" device, 2 OLC), the Meritorious Service Medal, and the Combat Action Badge.*

*Major O'Brien served as a Land Combat Systems test specialist in Nurnberg, Germany from 1990 to 1992. While assigned to 2<sup>nd</sup> Corps Support Command he deployed to Southwest Asia in support of OPERATION DESERT SHIELD and DESERT STORM. Major O'Brien served as a Scout Platoon Leader, Troop Executive Officer, and Squadron Maintenance Officer with the 3<sup>rd</sup> Squadron, 2<sup>nd</sup> Armored Cavalry Regiment at Fort Polk, Louisiana. While with the regiment he deployed to Haiti in support of OPERATION UPHOLD DEMOCRACY. Subsequently, Major O'Brien served with the 3<sup>rd</sup> Infantry Division (Mechanized) at Fort Stewart, Georgia as a G3 Training Standards and Evaluations Officer, then with 3<sup>rd</sup> Battalion, 69<sup>th</sup> Armor Regiment, 1<sup>st</sup> Brigade. While in 3-69 Armor Major O'Brien commanded the headquarters company and deployed to Kosovo in support of OPERATION JOINT GUARDIAN. He also commanded a tank company and deployed to Southwest Asia in 2003 in support of OPERATION IRAQI FREEDOM. In 2006 Major O'Brien transferred from Armor Branch to Functional Area 59, Strategic Plans and Policy, and since then has served as the Chief of Plans and Deputy G5 with the US Army Southern European Task Force/US Army Africa, Vicenza, Italy.*

*The views presented here are those of the authors and do not represent the position of the United States Army or the US Department of Defense.*

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