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Deadly Legacy:

U.S. Arms to Africa and the Congo War

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"We hope to build a new and lasting partnership between Africa and the world, based on common interests, mutual respect, and a shared commitment to peace, prosperity, and freedom."- U.S. Secretary of State Madeleine Albright Statement to the UN Security Council Ministerial on Africa, Sept. 24, 1998

"When the United States assumes the Presidency of the Security Council next month, in January 2000 – the first month of the first year of the new millennium – I wish to announce today that we intend to make Africa the priority of the month."- U.S. Permanent Representative to the United Nations Richard Holbrooke Pretoria, South Africa, Dec. 6, 1999

"The problem of all the ethnic and tribal wars must be either resolved or at least largely reduced through a big effort by the countries that deal in arms to prevent the over-militarisation of Africa."- Managing Director of the International Monetary Fund Michel Camdessus Comments to French radio, Jan. 2, 2000

Executive Summary

As the Clinton administration moves into the presidency of the United Nations Security Council, it is declaring January 2000, "the month of Africa." Hoping to counter criticisms that it has been engaged in a rhetorical promotion of U.S.-Africa relations over the past two years without substantive follow-up, the administration has announced its intent to prioritize finding solutions to the ongoing conflicts in the region, including a 30-year civil war that trudges on in Angola and the ongoing crisis in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC). It has not, however, accepted its own responsibility in helping to create the conditions that have led to these seemingly intractable conflicts.

Over the past few years, the administration has made considerable effort to put a new and improved face on its relations with African countries. High-level visits to the region – first by Secretary of State Madeleine Albright, then President Clinton himself in the spring of 1998, and U.S. Ambassador to the UN Richard Holbrooke this past December – have reinforced the idea of a new partnership with the continent based on promoting "African solutions to African problems." The reality, however, is that the problems facing Africa and her people – violent conflict, political instability, and the lowest regional rate of economic growth worldwide – have been fueled in part by a legacy of U.S. involvement in the region. Moreover, the solutions being proposed by the Clinton administration remain grounded in the counter-productive Cold-War policies that have defined U.S.-Africa relations for far too long.

Unfortunately, the ongoing war in the Democratic Republic of the Congo presents a vivid example of how U.S. policies – past and present – have failed the people of Africa. After more than two years of devastating war, African leaders are struggling, with little success, to implement the Lusaka peace accord. Signatories to the treaty continue to call for UN peacekeeping support even as they prepare for continued fighting. Despite its demonstrable role in planting the seeds of this conflict, the U.S. has done little to either acknowledge its complicity or help create a viable resolution. Official tours of the region and impressive rhetoric will not be enough to contribute to lasting peace, democratic stability, and economic development in Africa.

Major Findings

- **Finding 1 – Due to the continuing legacies of its Cold War policies toward Africa, the U.S. bears some responsibility for the cycles of violence and economic problems plaguing the continent.** Throughout the Cold War (1950-1989), the U.S. delivered over $1.5 billion worth of weaponry to Africa. Many of the top U.S. arms clients – Liberia, Somalia, the Sudan, and Zaire (now the Democratic Republic of the Congo or DRC) – have turned out to be the top basket cases of the 1990s in terms of violence, instability, and economic collapse.
- **Finding 2 – The ongoing civil war in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (formerly Zaire) is a prime example of the devastating legacy of U.S. arms sales policy on Africa.** The U.S. prolonged the rule of Zairian dictator Mobutu Sese Soko by providing more than $300 million in weapons and $100 million in military training. Mobutu used his U.S.-supplied arsenal to repress his own people and plunder his nation's economy for three decades, until his brutal regime was overthrown by Laurent Kabila's forces in 1997. When Kabila took power, the Clinton administration quickly offered military support by developing a plan for new training

operations with the armed forces.

- **Finding 3 – Although the Clinton administration has been quick to criticize the governments involved in the Congo War, decades of U.S. weapons transfers and continued military training to both sides of the conflict have helped fuel the fighting.** The U.S. has helped build the arsenals of eight of the nine governments directly involved in the war that has ravaged the DRC since Kabila's coup. U.S. military transfers in the form of direct government-to-government weapons deliveries, commercial sales, and International Military Education and Training (IMET) to the states directly involved have totaled more than $125 million since the end of the Cold War.
- **Finding 4 – Despite the failure of U.S. polices in the region, the current administration continues to respond to Africa's woes by helping to strengthen African militaries.** As U.S. weapons deliveries to Africa continue to rise, the Clinton administration is now undertaking a wave of new military training programs in Africa. Between 1991-1998, U.S. weapons and training deliveries to Africa totaled more than $227 million. In 1998 alone, direct weapons transfers and IMET training totaled $20.1 million. And, under the Pentagon's Joint Combined Exchange Training (JCET) program, U.S. special forces have trained military personnel from at least 34 of Africa's 53 nations, including troops fighting on both sides of the DRC's civil war – from Rwanda and Uganda (supporting the rebels) to Zimbabwe and Namibia (supporting the Kabila regime).
- **Finding 5 – Even as it fuels military build-up, the U.S. continues cutting development assistance to Africa and remains unable (or unwilling) to promote alternative non-violent forms of engagement.** While the U.S. ranks number one in global weapons exports, it falls dead last among industrialized nations in providing non-military foreign aid to the developing world. In 1997, the U.S. devoted only 0.09% of GNP to international development assistance, the lowest proportion of all developed countries. U.S. development aid to all of sub-Saharan Africa dropped to just $700 million in recent years.

Recommendations

- **Recommendation 1 – By restricting the flow of weapons and training and increasing support for sustainable development policies, the U.S. could help create the conditions needed for peace and stability to take root.** Although Congress recently passed legislation requiring the President to begin negotiations toward an international arms sales code of conduct based on human rights, non-aggression, and democracy, the U.S. continues to exempt its own exports from these same standards. The Clinton administration should make good on its acclaimed commitments to human rights and democracy by supporting passage of the bipartisan *McKinney-Rohrabacher Code of Conduct on Arms Transfers (HR 2269)* , a measure which would take U.S. weapons out of the hands of dictators and human rights abusers.
- **Recommendation 2 – All U.S. military training programs should receive congressional oversight and approval, with effective mechanisms in place for reviewing and assessing their impact on human rights and democratic consolidation in the recipient countries.** Despite congressional action to restrict military training from units engaged in human rights abuses, the Pentagon still carries out largely unmonitored Joint Combined Exchange Training (JCET) operations under a special forces exemption. Congress should take immediate steps to close the loopholes in JCET and other training programs by passing the *International Military Training Transparency and Accountability Act (HR 1063).* This bill, introduced by Rep. Chris Smith (R-NJ) and supported by a strong bi-partisan coalition, would prohibit all forms of military training and services to countries that are already ineligible for IMET.
- **Recommendation 3 – The Clinton administration should provide increased unconditional debt forgiveness to African nations and encourage them to shift resources away from military build-up and toward human development.** The U.S. should immediately forgive the hundreds of millions of dollars in military debt accrued by governments in Zaire, the Sudan, and Somalia. It should also take steps toward further debt relief by passing the *HOPE for Africa* bill introduced by Rep. Jesse Jackson, Jr. (D-IL) in the House *(HR 772)* and Sen. Russell Feingold (D-WI) in the Senate *(S 1636).* President Clinton should also commit to the Jubilee 2000 campaign's call for developing a plan, in conjunction with local non-governmental organizations and civil society, for full and unconditional debt relief this year.
- **Recommendation 4 – The U.S. should provide increased development assistance to Africa and encourage civil-society building.** President Clinton and Congress should restore the previous level of $800 million in development assistance to Africa in the FY2001 budget and work to increase funding to a more responsible level in coming years. The U.S. should strive to raise African development funding to $2 billion by 2003, and consult directly with non-governmental institutions to ensure that these funds are dispersed and used appropriately.

I. INTRODUCTION

In 1998, Africa suffered 11 major armed conflicts, more than any other continent. For the first time since 1989, Africa is the world's most war-torn region.[1] In this decade alone, 32 African countries have experienced violent conflict, and many of those face continuing civil war or the looming threat of renewed fighting.[2] Notably, most of the African countries engaged in serious conflict over the past fifty years have also been the recipients of U.S. weapons and training. Throughout the Cold War (1950-1989), the U.S. delivered over $1.5 billion worth of weaponry to Africa.[3] Military aid and training, covert weapons shipments, and political and financial backing poured in, as the war against communism was played out on African soil. In the process, the U.S. propped up corrupt dictators, armed some of the world's worst human rights abusers, and fueled violent conflict. In fact, many of the top U.S. arms clients of the Cold War – Liberia, Somalia, the Sudan, and Zaire (now the DRC) – have turned out to be the top basket cases of the 1990s in terms of violence, instability, and economic collapse.

Often, the U.S. offered weapons and military assistance to a repressive government with one hand while raising the other in the name of securing democracy and promoting stability. Inevitably, somewhere down the line the regime collapses, and U.S. policy-makers are left struggling to re-write their lines. Once a new government takes power, the cycle reemerges with the same old offers of U.S. military training to help "secure democracy." Despite the astounding regularity with which the policy of arming African governments has failed, U.S. policy-makers have been unable (or unwilling) to develop effective non-military forms of engagement.

Moreover, the U.S. has failed to acknowledge its own role in fueling conflict and undermining democratic development in Africa. A July 1999 Report by the U.S. Bureau of Intelligence and Research states clearly that "Arms transfers and trafficking and the conflicts they feed are having a devastating impact on Sub-Saharan Africa." Yet, the authors fail to attribute responsibility to the U.S. for either its past or current military weapons and training exports to Africa, explicitly leaving the U.S. out of the picture: "Arms suppliers in Western and Eastern Europe, the Middle East, North America, Latin America, and Asia have sold arms to African clients."[4] In fact, nowhere does the report mention U.S. arms transfers to the region, although more than $20 million worth of U.S. weapons and training were delivered to Africa in 1998 alone.[5] Nor is there any recognition that the hundreds of millions of dollars worth of U.S. equipment transferred to the Mobutu regime in Zaire and Jonas Savimbi's UNITA movement in Angola since the 1970's are *still* being utilized in current African conflicts.

Defenders of the Clinton administration's policy toward the provision of arms and training to African military forces point out that the United States is not the primary supplier of weaponry to the region, and that in any case U.S. military programs in Africa are designed to promote peacekeeping and professionalism, not proliferation and war. As we discuss below, whatever their intention may be, skills and equipment provided

by the U.S. have strengthened the military capabilities of combatants involved in some of Africa's most violent and intractable conflicts. As to the relative importance of U.S. arms transfers to Africa, data from the most recent edition of the U.S. Arms Control and Disarmament Agency's publication, World Military Expenditures and Arms Transfers, ranks the U.S. as the second leading arms supplier to both Central Africa (behind China and ahead of France) and Southern Africa (behind Russia and tied for second with France). In contrast, the most recent data from the Congressional Research Service suggests that at best the United States ranks sixth in arms transfers to Africa for the period from 1995-1998, after China, Russia, the United Kingdom, France, and Italy.[6]

Any assessment of the arms flow to Africa must take account of the substantial transfers of light weaponry that are carried out beyond normal government-to-government channels. For example, as Brian Wood and Johan Peleman point out in their recent report The Arms Fixers: Controlling the Brokers and Shipping Agents, the weapons suppliers to the perpetrators of the 1994 genocide in Rwanda included brokers and shippers in the United Kingdom, South Africa, and France, working with collaborators in Albania, Belgium, Bulgaria, Egypt, Italy, Israel, the Seychelles, and the former Zaire.[7] While the United States was not a major player in this traffic, many of its closest allies were. And the U.S. history of overt and covert weapons trafficking to the region helped nourish the informal networks which are now often the main source of supply for the world's most vicious ethnic conflicts. So the real question for U.S. policy towards African conflicts has more to do with responsibility than it does with statistics on who may hold the dubious distinction of being the leading arms supplier to the continent. If the United States is to play a credible role in resolving and preventing wars in Africa, it should be *reducing* its military role in the region, not expanding it. Only then will it have the diplomatic leverage needed to get other suppliers to follow suit.

As Clinton administration officials talk more and more of promoting peace and stability, consolidating democracy, and encouraging sustainable growth in Africa, they should also take a closer look at the long-term impacts of past and current policy toward the region. The ongoing conflict in the Democratic Republic of the Congo is only the latest example of how the U.S.'s Cold War legacy continues to wreak havoc in the developing world.

I I: U.S.-Congo Relations: Stabilizing the Region or Handicapping Peace?

"Zaire has been a stabilizing force and a staunch supporter of U.S. and Western policies for over two decades." - U.S. State Department, Congressional Presentation, 1991

On August 2, 1998, violent conflict erupted in the recently formed Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC or Congo). Within months, the civil war had unfolded into a complex international crisis engulfing Central Africa in what some have called Africa's First World War. In the early months of the war, the U.S. led intense diplomatic efforts to help contain the conflict, shuttling Deputy Secretary of State for African Affairs Susan Rice from one end of the continent to the other to urge a withdrawal of foreign troops and an immediate cease-fire. Rice's efforts were commendable, and the U.S. should continue to support a peaceful resolution of the conflict. Unfortunately, such last minute band-aid diplomacy is not enough to reverse the effects of decades of destabilizing U.S. involvement in the region.

Despite the signing of an African-brokered peace agreement in Lusaka in July 1999, peace and stability remain distant dreams for the people of Central Africa. Fighting continues in the Congo, and at least nine neighboring countries have become directly involved over the course of the conflict. The historical and political complexity of the war leaves little room for placing clear blame or prescribing simple solutions; however, the U.S. role in fueling the country's political instability and violent conflict has been swept under the rug for far too long.

Mobutu, Friend and Ally:

Bordering nine other countries and rich in natural resources, Zaire has been the economic and strategic heart of Africa since it gained its independence nearly 40 years ago. In 1965, after five years of political and military scuffling, Mobutu Sese Soko pushed his way into the presidency with the help of external backing from the CIA. Determined to maintain a foothold on the continent, the U.S. provided political and military support to its "friend and ally" for the next 30 years. In that time, Mobutu came to be known as one of Africa's most brutal dictators.

Despite continued reports of widespread corruption and human rights abuses in Zaire, the U.S. helped build Mobutu's arsenal with a fleet of C-130 transport aircraft and a steady supply of rifles, ammunition, trucks, jeeps, patrol boats, and communications equipment. By the time the dictator was ousted in 1997, the U.S. had delivered more than $300 million (measured in constant 1998 dollars) in military hardware to Mobutu's regime. Through the International Military Education and Training (IMET) program, the U.S. also trained 1,350 of Mobutu's soldiers at a cost of more than $100 million.[8] Although Zairian forces gained a reputation for violence and repression against civilians, the State Department continued to claim IMET training served to "safeguard Zaire's internal stability and territorial integrity without threatening the security of neighboring countries."[9]

U.S. policy toward Mobutu was rationalized on the grounds of fighting "communism" and Soviet influence in Africa, but the U.S. was clearly more concerned with securing its own interests in the region than helping foster a stable, secure, and peaceful future for the people of Central Africa. Lying at the center of the continent, Zaire could provide the U.S. with access to important resources, transportation routes, and political favors. Over the years, U.S. rhetoric changed slightly, placing greater emphasis on democratic reform of the regime and increased attention to human rights, but in reality policy continued to focus on promoting narrowly defined U.S. economic and strategic interests.

"The U.S. has an interest in having a stable and responsible government in Kinshasa," the 1986 State Department Congressional Presentation reads, "which influences the stability, as well as the foreign and domestic policies, of its nine bordering states."[10] How Mobutu's human rights abuses, political oppression, siphoning of government money, and use of a lawless military elite to subdue the people could have been justified as part of a "stable and responsible" government remains a disturbing question.

Moreover, even after the Cold War ended, the U.S. continued to provide military support to the Mobutu dictatorship. In 1991, the U.S. delivered more than $4.5 million in military hardware to Mobutu's government.[11] That same year, Congress suspended its economic assistance to Congo – not on human rights grounds, but because it had defaulted on loans provided by the U.S. government to cover its weapons purchases.[12] By that time, a hearty arsenal of deadly weaponry had already poured into the country, while Mobutu's fiscal corruption and brutal rule had incited political unrest and devastated the economy. According to the World Bank, 64.7% of the country's budget was reserved for Mobutu's discretionary spending in 1992; official Zaire figures put the estimate at 95%.[13]

Either the U.S. policy for promoting peace and democracy through a steady supply of military hardware and training to an undemocratic regime had failed miserably, or stated rationales masked other agendas. In either case, after three decades of oppressive rule Zaire hung ripe for violent upheaval, and U.S. policy reform was badly needed.

Enter Kabila

In 1996-97, Laurent Desiré Kabila and his Alliance of Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Congo swept through the country and ousted President Mobutu, calling for democratic freedom under a new government. Uncertain whether democratic reforms would actually be implemented under Kabila's self-installed government, but still hoping for a quiet end to the civil strife of the past few years, the U.S. chose to officially back the new government. At the time, the fact that the U.S. had supported the prior regime under similar rationale raised few eyebrows in Washington.

Before long, however, Kabila began his own anti-democratic crusade. Within a few short months of taking power, the new president banned political parties, suspended civil rights, and was reported to be fueling ethnic hatred. As reports of growing unrest and abuse trickled in, the U.S. held to a policy of engagement with Kabila, largely disregarding the voices of the democratic opposition and civil society groups struggling for reform within the country.

In its Congressional Presentation for FY99 Foreign Operations in Africa (written in 1997, as Kabila was coming to power), the State Department identified its "overriding objective" as "support [for] a successful post-Mobutu transition that results in a stable, prosperous, and democratic Congo." Despite the shaky future of the Kabila regime, U.S. State Department officials have continued to call for resumption of the IMET program (at a U.S. cost of $70,000) to support the new government in "developing an apolitical military cadre that respects human rights, the rule of law, and the concept of civilian control of the military." [14]

In FY2000, the DRC will also be eligible to receive Excess Defense Articles (EDA) on a grant basis under Section 516 of the Foreign Assistance Act of 1961. According to State, "EDA will support a rebuilding and professionalizing of the military following years of internal strife, and assist with maintaining internal security."[15] Why providing military training and equipment to a corrupt and abusive regime would promote democracy under Kabila, after the same policy had failed miserably for decades with Mobutu, was a question U.S. policy-makers should have been asking themselves. Unfortunately, before a debate on renewed military assistance to the Congo could begin, war had broken out.

Although the fighting that erupted in August 1998 between the new government's forces and a coalition of Mobutu-backers and former Kabila-supporters has remained largely contained within Congolese borders, at least eight other national armies have been pulled into the conflict. Foreign troops from Rwanda, Uganda, Burundi, Angola, Namibia, Sudan, Chad, and Zimbabwe have been reported in the region during the conflict, along with as many as twelve irregular, or non-governmental, armed groups, including the National Union for the Total Independence of

Angola (UNITA), the Sudanese People's Liberation Army, and the Interhamwe militia forces that were behind the Rwandan genocide. Rwanda, Uganda, and Burundi, as well as UNITA and other rebel forces, have backed the main rebel group known as the Rally for Congolese Democracy (RCD), while Namibia, Chad, Zimbabwe, and Angola contributed troops and hardware in support of Kabila's government forces. [16]

Other countries have also provided indirect support on both sides of the conflict. Libya is reported to have arranged the transport of troops from Chad to support Kabila. Sudan has financed three Ugandan guerrilla movements and also agreed to back Kabila. The South African government provided weapons to Rwanda in recent years and maintains good relations with President Museveni of Uganda, while private mercenaries from South Africa's Security Lining Pretoria Company have been commissioned by Kabila.[17] The complex web of alliances has continued to evolve, with factions splitting and leaders being displaced sporadically. Signatories to the Lusaka peace accord this July included six of the governments involved, plus 50 leaders of the various rebel factions fighting in the Congo.

Not surprisingly, the U.S. has provided weapons and training to most of the players in the Congo conflict.

U.S. Military Assistance in Africa's First World War

In 1998 alone, U.S. weapons to Africa totaled $12.5 million, including substantial deliveries to Chad, Namibia, and Zimbabwe – all now backing Kabila. On the rebel side, Uganda received nearly $1.5 million in weaponry over the past two years, and Rwanda was importing U.S. weapons as late as 1993 (one year before the brutal genocide erupted). U.S. military transfers in the form of direct government-to-government weapons deliveries, commercial sales, and IMET training to the states directly involved has totaled more than $125 million since the end of the Cold War *(see Tables 1 and 2.)* [18]

All told, the U.S. has helped build the arsenals of eight of the nine governments directly involved in the Congo War.   In addition, some of the Rwandan forces which played a key role in toppling the regime of long-time arms client Mobutu Sese Soko in Zaire had received training from U.S. special forces under the Joint Combined Exchange Training (JCET) program. The U.S. also provided an estimated $250 million in covert military assistance to UNITA's forces between 1986-1991, [19] and is alleged to be backing the Sudanese People's Liberation Army.

TABLE 1: Post-Cold War U.S. Arms Transfers to Governments Involved in the Congo War, 1989-1998(in constant 1998 dollars)

Country	Foreign Military Sales	Commercial Sales	TOTAL
Angola	0	31,000	31,000
Burundi	74,000	312,000	386,000
Chad	21,767,000	24,677,000	46,444,000
DRC	15,151,000	218,000	15,369,000
Namibia	2,311,000	1,934,000	4,245,000
Rwanda	324,000	0	324,000
Sudan	30,258,000	1,815,000	32,073,000
Uganda	1,517,000	9,903,000	11,420,000
Zimbabwe	567,000	828,000	1,395,000
TOTAL	**71,969,000**	**39,718,000**	**111,687,000**

TABLE 2: Post-Cold War International Military Education and Training (IMET) to Countries Involved in the Congo War, 1989-1998 (constant 1998 dollars)

Country	IMET $ Value	No. of STUDENTS
Angola	177,000	5
Burundi	1,324,000	53
Chad	1,968,000	115
Congo	1,229,000	50
Namibia	1,589,000	111
Rwanda	1,425,000	66
Sudan	154,000	0
Uganda	3,856,000	154
Zimbabwe	2,661,000	176
TOTAL	**14,383,000**	**730**

Source: Department of Defense, Foreign Military Sales, Foreign Military Construction Sales and Military Assistance Facts, Foreign Military Sales, Construction, and Assistance Facts as of September 1998 , (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Defense, 1999).

Although detailed reports of the fighting are difficult to confirm, U.S. military hardware was no doubt being used as the violence spread. During the height of the war, the New York Times reported the use of U.S. communications equipment by the rebels, and small arms like the U.S.-designed M-16 combat rifle, often circulating from past wars, have been used in both combat and civilian attacks.[20] Heavier equipment and training transferred to the region by the U.S. has also likely contributed to both sides of the war. Uganda, which received just under a million dollars in U.S. weapons in 1997 (up from $64,000 in 1996), boosted its total military expenditure in 1999 from $150 million to $350 million, increasing troop commitments and stockpiling tanks and antiaircraft missiles for use against Kabila's forces. Zimbabwe and Angola – both recipients of U.S. training and equipment – also sent jets, tanks, and troops into the combat.[21]

Because many U.S.-supplied weapons have outlasted the governments and conflicts for which they were intended, yesterday's supplies are finding new uses today. Last March a Belgian arms dealer was arrested in South Africa for selling 8,000 U.S. M16 rifles from Vietnam War era arsenals to Kabila's forces.[22] In fact, many of the illicit arms traffickers working in Central Africa got their start as covert operators for the U.S.

From her work investigating and interviewing illicit weapons dealers in Africa, Kathi Austin has documented a number of U.S.-sponsored smugglers working in the region, noting that "little attention is paid to how weapon suppliers fan the flames of the region's conflicts."[23] Last spring, four U.S. citizens claiming to be Christian missionaries were arrested in Zimbabwe for attempting to smuggle small arms caches – which included sniper rifles, shotguns, machine guns, firearms, telescopic sights, knives, camouflage cream, two-way radios and ammunition – across national borders.[24] U.S. policy has done so well in helping create a demand for weapons in the developing world, and the industry has been so eager to fill it, that the arms market is taking on a life of its own, largely outside government regulations and civilian oversight.

III: THE U.S. ROLE IN MILITARIZING AFRICA

"We need a simple and transparent set of rules to govern all our military education programs. The first rule should be that the United States does not give any kind of military assistance whatever to governments that murder their own people." -- Rep. Chris Smith (R-NJ), Subcommittee on International Operations and Human Rights, July 1998

While travelling with President Clinton to Africa in 1998, Reverend Jesse Jackson reflected on the changing stages of U.S. relations toward Africa. First came slavery, second came neglect, third was using Africa as a pawn, fourth was paternalism. Supposedly, however, the U.S. is now entering "the fifth stage, a partnership…the most mature stage of our development, the most politically sound, the most morally correct." During his address to the South African Parliament in March 1998, President Clinton dramatically proclaimed: "It used to be when American policymakers thought of Africa at all, they would ask, what can we do for Africa, or whatever can we do about Africa? Those were the wrong questions. The right question today is, what can we do with Africa?" Unfortunately, the answer appears to be: not a whole lot that we haven't done before.

In fact, the Clinton administration's approach to Africa continues to focus on securing short-term U.S. interests in the region, maintaining a safe distance from the ongoing problems, and encouraging near-sighted, armed responses to the complex problems of democratic transition and international peacebuilding. The U.S. should be working to deepen and broaden its consultation with African governments and civil society to identify root causes of instability and violence and create viable and lasting solutions. Too often, however, both the administration and Congress try to promote U.S.-Africa relations by simply strengthening their commitment to impose one-sided policies.

Rather than focusing greater attention on civil-society building, one of the most dramatic forms of "new partnership" being undertaken by the Clinton administration is a rising wave of military training operations. As a case in point, in the past two years the U.S. provided military training to six of the countries fighting in the DRC – Angola, Chad, Namibia, Rwanda, Uganda, and Zimbabwe.

U.S. military training now takes a number of forms in Africa, including traditional International Military Education Training (IMET), Expanded IMET (E-IMET), Joint Combined Exchange Training (JCET), and more recent training under the African Crisis Response Initiative (ACRI). IMET training for Africa has floated between $4-8 million throughout the 1990s. In 1998, the U.S. provided $5.8 million in IMET training for over 400 African soldiers.[25] As Congress has cut IMET funding in recent years, however, the other programs appear to have sprouted up to fill the gaps and further strengthen military-to-military relations between the U.S. and Africa. This year, the Department of Defense has also established the Africa Center for Strategic Studies (ACSS), which allegedly provides "academic" rather than tactical or operational instruction in "civil-military relations, national security strategy, and defense economics."[26]

JCET programs, which use special operations forces, remain exempt from congressional oversight and have only begun to be reported in detail to Congress and the public. From 1995-1998 U.S. special forces conducted JCET training in at least 34 of the 53 African countries, including Namibia, Rwanda, Uganda, and Zimbabwe – all fighting in the DRC – as well as Mozambique, Cote d'Ivorie, Equatorial Guinea, Ghana, Guinea-Bissau, Malawi, Mali, Mauritania, Morocco, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Tunisia, Cameroon, Botswana.[27] Although the number of troops trained under JCET is difficult to track, at least 9,100 host nation military personnel participated in the program worldwide in 1997.[28] Despite the Pentagon's claims that JCET helps "enhance host nation skills" and increase the U.S.'s "long-term…influence in the participating countries," little evidence exists to suggest that these programs fulfill their official purpose. They may in fact be contributing to counterinsurgency and human rights violations.

When Rwandan soldiers invaded the former Zaire in 1996, attacking refugee camps and massacring civilians, the U.S. was caught having to defend the special operations training that had been underway with Rwandan troops. Although U.S. officials had claimed the training was devoted to human rights, the Washington Post later reported that Rwandan troops were being trained in combat as well. As the Post concluded, "U.S. promotion of human rights has been overshadowed by questions about whether Rwandan units trained by Americans later participated in atrocities in the war in Zaire." A number of Members of Congress, including Rep. Christopher Smith (R-NJ) who chairs the House subcommittee on international operations and human rights, have questioned whether the Pentagon is even attempting to find out if troops trained under JCET have been involved in human rights violations.[29]

In 1997, the Department of Defense instituted the African Crisis Response Initiative (ACRI), a scaled down version of the African Crisis Response Force (ACRF) that was originally proposed, and began calling for more anti-narcotics operations in the region. ACRI's stated purpose is to "work in partnership with African countries to enhance their capacity to respond to humanitarian crises and peacekeeping challenges in a timely and effective manner…. to assist Africans in developing rapidly deployable, interoperable battalions from stable democratic countries."[30] However, the program has been criticized by analysts in both the U.S. and Africa for contributing to counter-insurgency operations or conventional warfare by the trained troops and providing yet another mechanism for channeling U.S. military training and equipment to favored regimes. Some view the program as no more than an insurance policy against U.S. involvement in peacekeeping operations in the region again.

As Daniel Volman, director of the Africa Research Project, has noted, "While the scope and scale of the ACRI program are quite limited, a number of important questions about the impact of the program and about future involvement of the United States in peacekeeping operations and other kinds of military activities in Africa remain unanswered….The declared intent of the program is to enhance the capability of [African] forces to conduct peacekeeping operations. But much of the training and equipment provided can also enhance their capability to engage in counter-insurgency operations or conventional warfare with other states."[31]

This year, under ACRI, the U.S. is providing about $8.1 million in grants to 39 African countries for military education and training, including Uganda, South Africa, Eritrea, and Ethiopia. Ethiopia and Eritrea have been engaged in a bloody on-again, off-again border war since May of 1998. In January 2000, the conflict threatened to heat up again as Ethiopian Prime Minister Meles Zenawi denounced the terms of a U.S.-supported peace plan.[32] Meanwhile, military units trained by the U.S. continue to be involved in human rights abuses and counter-insurgency efforts. In 1998, Ugandan troops trained under the new ACRI program were re-deployed a week later as part of a major

counter-insurgency campaign against the Allied Democratic Forces in western Uganda.[33]

The Clinton administration's latest undertaking, the Africa Center for Security Studies (ACSS) defines its mission as follows: to "support democratic governance in Africa by offering senior African civil and military leaders a rigorous academic and practical program in civil-military relations, national security strategy, and defense economics."[34] The program will be paid for by U.S. tax dollars and plans to commence operations in November of this year with a two-week seminar in Dakar, Senegal. DoD operates similar centers for other regional allies around the world.

Although ACSS has yet to be seen in action, critics argue that once again the U.S. is focusing its resources in the wrong arenas, promoting military relationships at the expense of democracy-building and conflict prevention. Clarissa Kayosa of Demilitarization for Democracy and the Year 2000 Campaign to Redirect World Military Spending to Human Development has noted that "While many African focused organizations in the United States agree on the need for a professional, law abiding, rights respecting, civilian controlled armed forces, U.S. military training in other parts of the world, including Africa, has mixed results at best….Africa is in a state of collapse now and what it needs is not more military assistance but more development assistance."[35]

African Militaries Trained by the U.S., 1997-98

Angola*	Ghana	Rwanda*
Benin	Guinea	Sao Tome & Principe
Botswana	Guinea-Bissau	Senegal*
Cameroon	Ivory Coast	Seychelles
Cape Verde	Kenya	Sierra Leone*
Central African Republic	Lesotho	South Africa
Chad*	Madagascar	Swaziland
Comoros	Malawi	Tanzania
Congo (Braz.)*	Mali	Togo
Cote d'Ivoirie	Mauritania	Tunisia
Djibouti	Mozambique	Uganda*
Eritrea*	Namibia*	Zambia
Ethiopia*	Niger	Zimbabwe*

* Engaged in conflict 1997-98 - The above table includes IMET, JCET, and ACRI

Although the long-term effects of JCET, ACRI, and ACSS remain to be seen, prioritizing U.S. military training over sustainable development programs offers little hope for addressing the roots of conflict and preventing future violence in Africa.

As Demilitarization for Democracy (DfD) has noted, the military's hold on political and economic power continues to undermine democratic transition in many African nations today. In a 1997 report, DfD found that 57% of African countries are clearly not democratic, and that the armed forces still hold substantial political and economic power in 40 of the 53 African nations. Yet, from 1991-1995, the U.S. provided military assistance to 50 countries in Africa, 94% of the nations on the continent. Although military assistance to Africa began to decline in the early 1990s, more recent years have seen new increases in training and weapons exports. Between 1991-1998, U.S. weapons and training deliveries to Africa totaled more than $227 million.[36]

Because many of the recipient countries remain some of the world's poorest, the U.S. government provided around $87 million in foreign military financing loans (subsidized by U.S. taxpayer dollars) to cover the costs, increasing the debt burden that is already suffocating the continent.[37] The DRC alone owes more than $150 million in outstanding DoD loans, with Liberia, Somalia, and Sudan owing another $160 million combined.[38] These loans, accrued while corrupt dictators were serving as U.S. clients, have further contributed to the economic hardships of these nations by saddling them with unproductive military debt.

In an article titled *"Why the U.S. Won't Help,"* a Nairobi newspaper recently explained, "Right from the days of the Cold War, Western governments have been comfortable with a situation in which African regimes squandered meager resources on the instruments of war, borrowing from the West to finance domestic consumption. The war in the Congo and the countries involved in it are a case in point."[39]

DfD's report cited "reduced political and economic power of armed forces" as a main element of democracy embraced by the African NGO community. Were the U.S. also contributing to civil society building and sustainable development efforts, perhaps its efforts to strengthen African militaries would seem less hypocritical. However, U.S. non-military development aid to Africa continues to face serious cuts even as the continent's debt grows and its economic future remains bleak.

In recent years, U.S. development aid to all of sub-Saharan Africa has dropped to around $700 million.[40] In 1995, Congress cut development assistance to Africa by 25%, following the elimination of funding in previous years for the Development Fund for Africa, a program which supports sustainable development projects. Three years later, in 1998, no funds were specifically earmarked for Africa from the meager $1.8 billion in total development funding allocated in the U.S. budget, leaving the world's poorest countries competing for scarce funds.[41] In 1997, the U.S. devoted only 0.09% of GNP to international development assistance, the lowest proportion of all developed countries. Only 20% of that aid went to the world's least developed nations. *While the U.S. ranks number one in global weapons exports, it falls dead last among industrialized nations in providing non-military foreign aid to the developing world.* [42]

Still, critics will argue that U.S. military weapons and training to Africa remain at a negligible level in relation to international arms transfers. At approximately $20.1 million in 1998, the amount of direct weapons sales and IMET training to all of Africa constitutes only a small fraction of

the $12-15 billion in U.S. military exports transferred globally every year. The numbers do pale in comparison to the more than $500 million in U.S. weapons that went to Egypt or the $1 billion to Israel in 1998 alone.[43] But then perhaps the question should be one of good policy and long-term consequences rather than comparative statistics. As a November State Department report on arms flows to Central Africa recognized, "Although the infusion of weapons to this region is small compared with arms transfers in the rest of the world, the impact of such trafficking on the politically fragile Central Africa/Great Lakes region has been catastrophic."[44] Ironically, U.S. weapons sales were not mentioned in the report.

Although the Cold War has been over for nearly a decade, U.S. policies toward Africa remain grounded in the ideology that military might should serve as the main instrument for promoting democracy and stability across the continent. Little thought seems to be given to the compounded effects of enhancing the military capacity of regions where basic human needs like a living wage, freedom from oppression, stable government, and the rule of law, remain unmet.

IV: CHANGING RHETORIC, CHANGING POLICY

"The time is long past when one could claim ignorance about what was happening in Africa or about what was needed to achieve progress. The time is also past when the responsibility for producing change could be shifted onto others' shoulders. It is ours and it is theirs – the world's and Africa's." -- UN General Secretary Kofi Annan

Since the war began in the Congo, numerous regional and international attempts to broker a peace agreement have failed. U.S. efforts to contain the spiraling conflict early on, although perhaps well-intentioned, were poorly developed. Deputy Secretary of State for African Affairs Susan Rice was directed to meet only with Kabila's government officials, without working to open channels of communication with the leaders of the opposition groups. (Opposition leaders included long-time human rights lawyer Arthur Zahidi Ngoma and African democracy and reconciliation specialist Wamba dia Wamba, who has been instrumental in the Burundian peace process.)

Rice's efforts were met with skepticism in much of Africa, and in the end, did little to calm the flames of the crisis. At the same time, the U.S. continued selling weapons to a number of the countries involved in the war. By the time the civil war became an international crisis, the U.S. had little credibility left to play the peacemaker and finally gave up. Frustrated by its lack of leverage in the region, the administration concluded last December that the combatants would not accept a "made in America" peace plan. In the words of one official, the U.S. "would have been laughed out of Dodge by African leaders who remember when their countries were client states."[45]

Now, more than a year later, parties to the DRC conflict are requesting the presence of UN peacekeepers and international support in implementing the Lusaka peace accord, even as sporadic fighting threatens the fragile agreement. The Clinton administration has announced a financial contribution to the peace process, but continues to turn a blind eye to its own involvement in fueling the violence and, consequently, any responsibility in helping seek a lasting solution. As the threat of renewed war looms, State Department James Rubin recently told the press "The U.S. is deeply concerned by reports of military preparations, including the movement of troops and materiel by forces on both sides."[46] Rather than reprimanding the parties for their inability to sustain the peace, perhaps the U.S. should begin addressing its own contributions to the conflict.

As the world's last remaining superpower – and its leading weapons supplier – the United States is obligated to address the legacy of conventional weapons proliferation. The Clinton administration itself has explicitly noted the devastating legacy that a plague of weapons has left in Africa. Countries like Angola and Mozambique now report as many anti-personnel landmines buried beneath the earth as people treading it. The proliferation of small arms in Africa has become an internationally recognized crisis undermining global development and breeding a new generation of child soldiers. This past September, Sec. of State Albright told the UN Security Council Ministerial on Africa that "we should move now to curb arms transfers to zones of conflict in Africa....[and] we must put in place responsible arms transfer practices that are effective worldwide."

Yet, real action is not on the agenda. Military training programs continue to promulgate, weapons sales to the developing world are on the rise, and small arms manufacturers are looking to increase exports worldwide. Although U.S. arms manufacturers often boast of making the world a safer place and the Pentagon rallies around human rights training for foreign militaries, history teaches a different lesson. Unless the U.S. recognizes and begins to remedy the mistakes of the past, the uncontrolled transfer of military equipment and training will continue to impede human development and undermine efforts toward a sustainable peace, in Africa and around the world.

Arms control critics will no doubt continue to argue that "Guns don't kill people; people kill people." (Interesting point considering some of the people the U.S. has armed to the hilt.) The Rwandan genocide of 1994, inflicted largely with machetes, rocks, and other nonmilitary weapons, is often touted as proof that arms control just doesn't work. Ultimately, however, those arguments ignore the long-term political, economic, and social effects of flooding the developing world with deadly weaponry and military training. While the U.S. has recently begun to call for stronger monitoring and policing mechanisms to limit illicit weapons trafficking, the government continues to focus on the demand side of sales rather than its own contributions as a major weapons supplier.

Certainly, the U.S. arms trade has not been the sole cause of conflict in Africa. However, the weapons and resources that are available to parties involved in a conflict do play a critical role in determining whether a dispute will evolve into violence, and, if so, how long and devastating that violence will be. Moreover, as Africans work to overcome the problems of corrupt governments and a growing culture of violence, the international community has a responsibility to support those efforts through policies that promote sustainable development and peaceful nation-building – rather than augmenting existing instabilities with uncontrolled arms trade policies.

Notably, the Clinton administration has begun to take a number of steps to address weapons proliferation in Africa. President Clinton is supporting a moratorium on the production and transfer of small arms in West Africa, has announced increased debt relief to the most impoverished countries, and called for restoring African development aid to its previous level of $800 million during this year's budget debate. This past September, at a UN Security Council Ministerial meeting, Secretary of State Albright announced that the U.S. would "refrain from selling arms to regions of conflict not already covered by arms embargoes," marking an important policy shift toward restricting dangerous weapons flows.[47] The administration has been also been pressing for greater restraint of weapons sales to nations engaged in conflict through the Wassenaar regime, an international arms control organization. Such unilateral and multilateral initiatives are vital for reducing the levels of violence and promoting peaceful development in Africa. However, they have not yet been fully implemented or even received the approval of Congress, and the U.S. continues to insist that international initiatives preclude any real national policy reform.

In the meantime, Cold War policies proceed. In 1998, the State Department licensed commercial weapons sales by U.S. manufacturers to sub-Saharan Africa worth up to $64 million, on top of the $12 million in government-to-government deliveries that year. Commercial sales to the region included 300 M16s, 236 pistols and revolvers, 3940 rifles, and 10.8 million cartridges of .22-.50 caliber ammunition. A number of the countries engaged in the Congo war were recipients of these stocks, including Zimbabwe, Uganda, and Namibia.[48] Congress also continues to provide only meager amounts of debt relief and development aid. Of the $370 million requested by the Clinton administration for various debt

relief initiatives in FY2000, less than half – $123 million – was approved by Congress.

The hypocrisy of asking Africa to develop and democratize while shrinking levels of non-military international aid and increasing weapons and training to the continent does not seem to have registered with policy-makers. To demonstrate real commitment to developing a new partnership with Africa, the U.S. needs to redirect the focus away from strengthening military capacity and toward promoting human development in Africa.

V. KEY POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

By restricting the flow of weapons and training and increasing support for sustainable development policies, the U.S. could help create the conditions needed for peace and stability to take root.

Curbing Military Exports and Training:

- The *McKinney-Rohrabacher Code of Conduct on Arms Transfers (HR 2269)* , a measure which would take U.S. weapons out of the hands of dictators and human rights abusers, passed the House in 1997. That bill has been reintroduced in the 106th Congress but has not yet received enough support for final passage. In November 1999, Congress did pass a limited measure that requires the President to begin negotiations on an international code of conduct based on human rights, democracy, and non-aggression. However, this legislation does not condition U.S. sales on these basic standards. In order to legitimately press for an international arms trade regime, the U.S. needs to take unilateral steps as well. Both the House and Senate should commit to passing the full McKinney-Rohrabacher Code of Conduct in 2000, and President Clinton should sign the bill into law before his term closes.
- Congress should take also immediate steps to close the loopholes in Joint Combined Exchange Training (JCET) and other training programs by passing the *International Military Training Transparency and Accountability Act (HR 1063).* This bill, introduced by Rep. Chris Smith (R-NJ) and supported by a strong bi-partisan coalition, would prohibit all forms of military training and services to countries that are already ineligible for International Military Education Training (IMET). All U.S. military training programs should receive congressional oversight and approval, with effective mechanisms in place for reviewing and assessing their impact on human rights and democratic consolidation in the recipient countries.

Promoting Human Development:

- International debt relief that is *not* conditioned on unproven and often damaging structural adjustment programs has become a necessary prerequisite for peace and development in Africa. President Clinton and Congress should commit to unconditional debt relief and encourage civil society-building in Africa by immediately forgiving all military debt accrued by governments no longer in power and by passing the HOPE for Africa bill as introduced by Rep. Jesse Jackson, Jr. This bill offers the most comprehensive debt relief and human development policy currently under consideration in Congress. President Clinton should also commit to the Jubilee 2000 campaign's call for developing a plan this year, in conjunction with local non-governmental organizations and civil society, for full and unconditional debt relief.
- Finally, at the very least, the Administration and Congress should restore the previous level of $800 million in development assistance to Africa in the FY2001 budget. This level of funding should serve as the floor – not the ceiling – for future aid packages. The U.S. should further strive to raise African development funding to $2 billion by 2003, and consult directly with non-governmental institutions to ensure that funds are dispersed and used appropriately. The negligible amount of aid provided each year for African development can only be called disgraceful in comparison to the billions spent each year on the U.S. arms trade.

In times of budget crises, increased military spending, and a pull from many toward greater isolationism, creating real change in U.S.-Africa relations will require a demanding public, as well as effective leadership. At a press briefing in November, Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs Susan Rice was asked poignantly by a journalist, "I am curious as to why you think that the men and women of the Congo should believe, especially given the United States' long history of involvement in the Congo in support of Mobutu – why should the men and women of the Congo believe that the U.S. really has the Congo's interests at heart?"[49]

Until the U.S. is willing to serve the interests of long-term peace and stability, rather than short-term profit and politics, its Cold War policies will live on in Africa – wreaking destruction in places like the DRC, Angola, and Sierra Leone, Eritrea and Ethiopia. In November 1999, the State Department concluded: "Arms trafficking to the Central Africa/Great Lakes region will continue unabated for the foreseeable future," noting that, "restricting arms flows to the region will require an unprecedented demonstration of sustained political will on the part of the regional and international leaders."[50] By shifting a mere fraction of the energy that currently goes to strengthen African militaries toward non-military alternatives that could promote democracy, development, and peacebuilding, the United States could make a significant contribution to providing that leadership and promoting security and stability in the region. We should embark on that path of change now, before the potential for positive engagement in the future is lost to the legacies of the past.

OTHER RESOURCES FOR INFORMATION AND ACTION

The following groups work to reduce weapons transfers and/or improve U.S. policy toward Africa:

- **The Africa Fund** 50 Broad Street, Suite 711, New York NY 10004, Tel: 212 785-1024 Fax: 212 785-1078 Email: africafund@igc.org Web: www.prairienet.org/acas/afund.html
- **The Africa Policy Information Center** 110 Maryland Ave. NE, #509, Washington, DC 20002, USA Tel: (202) 546-7961 Fax: (202) 546-1545 Email: apic@igc.apc.org Web: www.africapolicy.org
- **Arms Trade Resource Center** World Policy Institute 65 Fifth Ave., Suite 413, New York City, NY 10003 Tel: (212) 229-5808 Fax: (212) 229-5579 Email: hartung@newschool.edu Web: www.worldpolicy.org/projects/arms
- **Demilitarization for Democracy** 1755 Massachusetts Avenue, NW Suite 312, Washington, DC 20036 Tel: (202) 232-3317 Fax: (202) 232-3440 Email: pdd@clark.net Web: www.dfd.net
- **Federation of American Scientists** 307 Massachusetts Ave., NE Washington, DC 20002 Tel: (202) 675-1018 Fax: (202) 675-1010 Email: tamarg@fas.org Web: www.fas.org/asmp
- **International Action Network on Small Arms (IANSA)** Box 422 London, WC1E 7BS United Kingdom Email: contact@iansa.org Web: www.iansa.org
- **Jubilee 2000 Coalition** 1 Rivington Street, London EC2A 3DT Tel: +44 (0)171 739 1000 Fax: +44 (0)171 739 2300 Email: mail@jubilee2000uk.org Web: www.jubilee2000uk.org
- **Washington Office on Africa** 212 East Capitol Street Washington, DC 20003 Tel: 202-547-7503 Fax: 202-547-7505. Email: woa@igc.apc.org Web: www.woaafrica.org

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14 U.S. State Department, Congressional Presentation for Foreign Operations, FY 1999, p 79.

15 U.S. State Department, Congressional Presentation for Foreign Operations, FY 2000, p 96.

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