

US intensifies military training operations across Africa

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Last month, nearly 100 military and diplomatic officials from eight East African nations gathered in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia for the United States Army Africa (USARAF) led joint exercise “Justified Accord 17” (JA17), a training exercise aimed at increasing cooperation and furthering military interests for the nations involved.

The Peace Support Training Center in Addis Ababa, where the annual exercises were held, operates under the auspices of the US Africa Command (AFRICOM), one of nine Pentagon-administered combatant commands across the globe. USARAF is the component of AFRICOM which conducts land forces training on the continent.

Headquartered in Stuttgart, Germany, AFRICOM’s mission is to expand Washington’s influence and dominance on the African continent.

“We look forward to working with you—learning with you and from you.” Deputy Commander of USARAF Brigadier General Jon Jensen said before the crowd at Justified Command’s opening ceremony.

Discussions during the week-long exercise centered on the African Union-led offensive in Somalia (AMISOM). Somalia has geostrategic significance for Washington, as it fronts the waterway for the world’s oil traffic from the Middle East through the Horn of Africa and the Gulf of Aden.

Speaking to these interests, Jensen told the crowd, “AMISOM has strategic importance to all of us.”

AMISOM’s mission is to shore up support for Washington’s puppet government in Mogadishu, which has little support in the country. Somalia is in complete disarray, largely due to Washington’s decades-long military operations in the country. Much of the country is ruled by Islamist militants that make up the terrorist group al-Shabbab, or militias fighting for various tribal

warlords.

AMISOM’s mission statement on its web site speaks of the geopolitical and capitalist interests it is seeking to promote: “[AMISOM’s mission] is to provide support to the Federal Government of Somalia in its efforts to stabilize the country, facilitate delivery of humanitarian aid, and create necessary conditions for the reconstruction and sustainable development of Somalia.”

The growing number of training exercises and operations coordinated by AFRICOM point to a “pivot to Africa” and make clear Washington’s aim of imperialist domination of the African continent. Washington is determined to halt China’s economic influence in Africa, and is utilizing its massive military power to counter Beijing.

Also unsettling to Washington’s foreign policy elites is the perceived lack of influence of the US in Africa, with only one permanent military base on the continent, Camp Lemonnier in Djibouti on the Horn of Africa, from which AFRICOM operates.

It is noteworthy that these military operations are being conducted behind the backs not only of the American people, but also of the African masses, whose anti-war sentiments can find no expression in the political establishment.

Last month, AFRICOM hosted Uganda’s military for training at its satellite training center in Fort Polk, Louisiana, which trains military personnel from around the world at its Joint Readiness Training Center (JRTC). The JRTC conducts its training by utilizing role-playing and mock situations and scenarios, such as terrorist sieges of cities, crowd control scenarios, and natural disasters.

“It brings in such reality”... “The agencies involved in role play—police, government, citizens—create a

realism because they are playing their roles very well, (communicating) their feelings and values,” UPDF Lt. Col. Saad Katemba reported to the AFRICOM news service.

A group of 19 personnel from the Ugandan People’s Defense Forces (UPDF) participated in the training with the anticipation that the UPDF would set up a Combat Training Center modeled after that of JRTC.

“This type of (facility) would fill a lot of training gaps,” Katemba noted. “We can see here that it works.”

Uganda is a key regional ally of US imperialism, and has deployed its UPDF forces in support of Washington’s puppet governments in South Sudan and Somalia. Additionally, some UPDF forces make up part of MONUSCO, the UN-led military operation in the resource-rich Democratic Republic of the Congo.

According to a 2012 briefing report by USARAF , Uganda provides a space at the airport in Entebbe for a vast spying operation conducted by AFRICOM utilizing turboprop planes.

It has also been reported that there are “black sites” in Kampala operated on behalf of the US for the interrogation and torture of suspected terrorists.

In Malawi, military planners from USARAF gathered in the capital Lilongwe to put the final touches on its African Land Forces Summit (ALFS) to be held in the country in May.

“This will put Malawi on the map,” Malawi Defense Force General Griffin Phiri told the group at the planning event last month.

ALFS is an annual week-long seminar bringing together military chiefs to facilitate coordination between AFRICOM and African nations. In reality, this is nothing short of the promotion of Washington’s geopolitical interests by utilizing its massive military power.

Speaking of the summit, US Army Brigadier General and deputy commander of USARAF Kenneth Moore said, “We are all professionals. We may have very different cultures, our army cultures are different, but we are all dedicated to improving ourselves and our militaries.”

Coinciding with the summit is the conflict embroiling the governments of Malawi and Tanzania in a border dispute over Lake Malawi, a region which is potentially rich in oil deposits. Even as Tanzania has laid claim to 50 percent of the lake, which is Africa’s third largest,

Malawi has awarded oil exploration licenses for the disputed area to the UK company Surestream Petroleum.

The Malawian government has accused Tanzania of intimidation of Malawi fishermen on the lake, and has referred the dispute to the African Union for resolution.

In Kenya, AFRICOM has conducted various training events and cemented cooperative military arrangements, most notably Kenya’s commitment of its armed forces to Washington’s imperialist operation in Somalia.

The ramping up of its military operations in Africa exposes the true intentions of Washington and how little it regards the interests of the African masses.

AFRICOM will not solve the social crisis of poverty, lack of decent housing, health care, education, food and sanitary living conditions experienced by the African masses. To the contrary, it will only exacerbate these intolerable social ills.

AFRICOM’s vast operations on the continent constitute a significant increase in the tempo of the “scramble for Africa” on the part of Washington, which desperately seeks to secure the continent’s vast economic resources for its national corporate and banking interests at the expense of its rivals.

The expansion of operations in Africa coincides with the broader reactionary objectives of the Trump administration. With the recent bombing of Syria, open discussion of war plans against North Korea (and ultimately China), and the pursuit of a nationalist “trade war” policy marked by Trump’s recent executive orders instituting the enactment of tariffs on imports to the US, Washington has made it clear that it is willing to risk the lives of millions in order to ensure the interests of American capitalism.

The US turn towards militarism to solve the crisis of the capitalist system represents a warning to the African and international working class that the elite is prepared to plunge the entire planet into a devastating world war in order to save the outmoded and crisis-ridden capitalist system.



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