

AFRICOM NO HOME IN THE DRC

The Congolese International Congress (“CIC”), a grassroots movement of the Congolese and its Diaspora throughout the world, is currently lobbying its members here in the United States, Asia, Europe, Latin America, Africa, and of course the Democratic Republic of Congo, to join hands and oppose the imminent transfer of AFRICOM (short for Africa Command) into the Democratic Republic of the Congo, their war torn native land.

In 2007, President George W. Bush directed the creation of a U.S. African military command known as AFRICOM. AFRICOM is currently still housed in Stuttgart, Germany. However, during her recent trip to the Congo, Secretary of State Hilary Clinton apparently engaged in negotiations aimed at the implantation of AFRICOM in the Congo utilizing the disused Kamina military base located in Katanga province. According to the Pentagon and the Department of State, the new command will focus on conflict prevention rather than military intervention in African countries. However, **critics of the controversial AFRICOM program argue that the command is simply a new U.S. attempt to gain greater access to and control of Africa’s natural resources, including oil and other strategic minerals; to contain China; and conduct the war on terror on African soil.** As a result, many African countries have rejected the AFRICOM presence since its inception.

At CIC, we believe that the Congo must unambiguously reject AFRICOM now. The Congo must be left alone to allow its people to shape its destiny apart from international rivalries and outside influences. The Congo has paid a huge price in terms of human sacrifice (millions of people dead) from the Cold War up through the present ongoing proxy war of invasion and occupation, funded in large measure by external powers and entities. But there was no peace dividend for the Congo when the Cold War ended. Instead, the end of the Cold War was used to justify the end of developmental and economic assistance aggravating and contributing to the outbreak of a war of invasion and occupation since 1996; a war which has resulted in further millions of dead Congolese with the benign neglect of the international community.

The Congo is not alone in rejecting AFRICOM. On July 15, 2007, the South African news outlet, *Sunday Independent*, described African concerns about the new command and its role as designed by the Bush administration to help the United States in its military prosecution of the war on terror. The United States pretends, however, that combat troops will not be housed in AFRICOM. **Following South Africa’s rejection, several other African countries, including Nigeria and the African Union itself, have said “NO” to housing AFRICOM, a “homeless military apparatus” on the African continent.**

Moreover, Africa has a different definition of terrorism from the United States. Terrorism in Africa and in the Congo has an indigenous definition arising from a long association with and spanning from centuries of colonialism and more recently, apartheid. For example, during apartheid in South Africa the "Terrorism" Act of 1967 was used to perpetrate the regime’s white supremacist policies against the black majority. In the colonial and post-colonial Congo, freedom fighters were portrayed as "terrorists" by those interested in preserving vested interests from colonial times; Lumumba, for example, was falsely portrayed as a communist and a dangerous terrorist and he was assassinated with the complicity of the United States. The United States placed Nelson Mandela on the terrorist list. It was only in 2008, that the United States embarrassingly removed Mandela from its terrorist list. Thus, AFRICOM presence and interferences reinforce the militarization of bilateral cooperation while consolidating the local warlords' definition of terrorists that includes many Congolese freedom fighters and human rights activists. In addition, it has layers of negative racial overtones. **CIC says NO to AFRICOM!**