

TO: General John Abizaid
CC: RADM Richard Hunt
FROM: Chuck Boyd
DATE: 21 November 06
SUBJECT: CENTCOM (CJTF-HOA) Trip Report

John,

Once again we entered your area of responsibility to learn, and, hopefully, to be helpful upon our return. This trip, more than any in memory, left us much richer for the experience, but with very mixed feelings: amazed, proud, and depressed, all at the same time. Amazed because much of what you are doing there was completely off our radar screen and it appears to be exactly what we ought to be doing in this new security environment; proud because seeing our people - warriors of every conceivable skill set and service - dedicated and excited to be doing mostly non-warrior kinds of things to help people and nations desperately in need; and somewhat depressed to see Somalia on a path toward disaster with a very low probability that the international community will focus serious attention on it until after the country is lost to a fundamentalist, perhaps Taliban type regime.

Our observations and conclusions are contained in the report attached. With this many smart and self confident travelers (their leader excluded), finding precise agreement on just what we learned was not always easy, but I think what we have provided for you fairly reflects consensus. We hope it is of value to you.

We debriefed the Assistant Secretary for African Affairs at State on 6 November, and have attempted--thus far unsuccessfully--to schedule one with the Under Secretary of Defense for Policy. Interest level appears to reflect that of the International community at large.

Of greater importance I think is that we debriefed two large audiences of our own influential BENS members via conference call, and talked with numerous members of the press. I will meet with the UN Secretary General on 30 November. Our views do get heard.

As I told you in an earlier dispatch, I believe RADM Hunt was exactly the right man to be in charge of this terribly important new mission. His troops, as we have come to expect, were quite simply superb.

With warmest regards,

Chuck

BENS/CJTF-HOA TRIP - OCTOBER, 2006

SUNDAY, OCTOBER 8 - KENYA

- CJTF-HOA/ADM Hunt brief
- US Embassy country team brief
- Manda Bay visit
- Meeting with Mr. Ole Lankas, Lamu District Commissioner

MONDAY, OCTOBER 9 - KENYA, DJIBOUTI

- Meeting with Hon. M. M. Wetang'ula, Assistant Minister for International Affairs
- Meeting with General Jeremiah Kianga, Kenyan Chief of General Staff
- Meeting with Hon. Mutaki Kagwe, Minister of Information and Communication
- Lunch with International Chamber of Commerce
- Visit to Kibera medical clinic (PEPFAR site)

TUESDAY, OCTOBER 10 -- DJIBOUTI

- Meeting with President Ismail Omar Guelleh
- Visit to USS Saipan (in the Gulf of Aden)
- Visit to Djibouti's port (Porte au Peche) and the Dubai Ports container facility

WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 11 - DJIBOUTI, YEMEN

- Meeting with Djiboutian Professional Women's Group
- US Embassy country team brief in Sana'a, Yemen
- Reception with Yemeni officials and business leaders
- Tour of Sana'a souk

THURSDAY, OCTOBER 12 - YEMEN, ETHIOPIA

- Visit to displaced persons camp in Dire Dawa
- Hirsu site visit
- Visit to school project in Dire Dawa
- Reception at US Ambassador's residence in Addis Ababa

FRIDAY, OCTOBER 13 - ETHIOPIA, KENYA

- US Embassy country team brief
- Breakfast with Ethiopian Foreign Minister
- Meeting with Patrick Mazimhaka, Deputy Chairman of the African Union
- Meeting with Hon. Meles Zenawi, Prime Minister of Ethiopia

BENS DELEGATION

Mary Boies

Partner, Boies & McInnis LLP

General Charles G. Boyd, USAF (Ret.)

President & CEO, Business Executives for National Security

William Campbell

General Partner, Marbill Management, LLP

Eric Fanning

SVP, Strategic Development, Business Executives for National Security

Ramon Marks

Partner, Arnold & Porter LLP

Chris Melton

Managing Partner, The White Oak Group

Peter Thoren

Executive Vice President, Access Industries

Mark Treanor

Senior Executive Vice President and General Counsel, Wachovia Corp.

KENYA

We were surprised at how little progress in so many important areas Kenya has made in the past few years. This is a country much more advanced across the board than its other Horn of Africa neighbors, but seemingly unable to build on its better foundation. We heard reports of a dramatic surge in crime, and violent crime in particular – something relatively rare in Kenya previously. There was also disturbing evidence of press censorship and harassment. But we did meet with some impressive new leadership, which left us encouraged.

We were deeply moved to see the degree to which the USG is now targeting resources toward the AIDS crisis in Africa. Previous EUCOM and CENTCOM briefings have persuaded us as to the serious impact this epidemic has on national security in the region. Our government's generous response to the dire health consequences of this disease, even if delayed by some standards, is making a clear impact both in terms of saving lives and as a side benefit, somewhat offsetting our otherwise tarnished reputation. Under the President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR), in Kenya alone, 600 thousand have been tested and counseled, and 250 thousand are receiving free care, with 110 thousand on free anti-viral medicines.

DJIBOUTI

One's first thought upon visiting Djibouti is that here is another country the very existence of which raises questions. Little during our visit helped answer this question. The strategic value of Djibouti has been apparent since well before the French took it to balance the British presence at Aden. Today, that value is still apparent. Djibouti sits at a chokepoint in world commerce, between the Red Sea and the Gulf of Aden, with Yemen just across the straights. However, it is hard to see how this tiny country, unblessed with resources, cursed with an unbelievably oppressive climate, and suffering from the scourge of khat (resulting in three hour workdays, and consuming one-third to one-half of an average income), can remain a viable state. The black flag at the American camp warning of a dangerous heat index was raised each day before we had finished breakfast, and though the Americans serving there still perform in these conditions, it's not clear any one else does. The American presence there clearly accounts for a major source of the government's revenue.

We were taken on a tour of the new port facility being built there. While the plans are very impressive, it's not clear what market in this poor and unstable neighborhood will support such a large facility, or what transportation infrastructure might be used to move goods inland. If the plan is to capitalize on the fact that Ethiopia is landlocked, and monopolize all seafaring trade in and out of the country, there is the potential to create a situation of growing tension with that important neighbor. Furthermore, with Djibouti's port an alternative to ports in unstable areas, it might actually depend on that

instability going forward. Some of the BENS travelers were more optimistic about both the prospects of this nation and the important role it might play strategically for us, and believe, at a minimum, that it is in our interest to help support the port of a friendly and stable country in this critically important region.

YEMEN

We experienced in Yemen yet another example of where a relatively small amount of military to military cooperation can go a long way in strengthening relations. This country supported Saddam Hussein in the first Gulf War, and we arrived on the eve of the 6th anniversary of the bombing of the USS Cole. A military relationship that was essentially built from scratch after that incident has yielded what the DATT there describes as an “asset relationship.”

While this is a country with many difficulties and shortcomings, including high illiteracy rates, very low oil reserves and an agriculture system that requires the importation of 85% of all food, it also means there are many opportunities for the US to offer assistance. As we found during our visit to North Africa, here is another Muslim country – even more importantly located – interested in increased US cooperation. It came as a real shock to us, and a clear sign of how this country is prioritized in the US, to learn that no US Member of Congress has visited this country in over nine years. The embassy was quick to point out, however, the number of visits you have made.

In Yemen, we touched briefly on the growing scarcity of water. More alarming estimates predict that Sana’a could be the first capital city to run out of water in history. Your trip planners have in previous instances discussed with us the growing importance of water in many regional relationships within your command. Perhaps it might be a subject we explore in more detail on a future trip.

ETHIOPIA

Our first impression in Ethiopia was of our country team’s strength, particularly in the leadership of Ambassador Huddleston. Moreover, this impressive team couples well with CJTF-HOA to create powerful synergy. Our ability, for example, to very quickly move thousands of tents to Dire Dawa in order to shelter those left homeless because of the floods made a deep impression on the Ethiopians. This huge humanitarian success, which translated into countless lives saved and a resulting public relations success for the US, would not have been possible if we did not have forward deployed forces and resources in the Horn.

Despite the history of past and present humanitarian crises faced by this government, and the real need for concerted focus on increased development, Ethiopia is a country surrounded by conflict: the civil war in Sudan to the West; an increasingly contentious

border dispute with Eritrea to the North (in what also appears to be largely a personal clash between the two countries' presidents); and a largely failed state in Somalia to the South and East which has designs on large parts of current Ethiopian territory. This country can ill afford to divert its resources to war, and yet has conflicts on all sides. This, the last country of our visit, further amplified the need to look at these conflicts regionally, and with a much greater sense of urgency.

SOMALIA

The two countries of greatest concern in this region, Somalia and Sudan, are prioritized in reverse order there as they are in the United States. While the question of Sudan and Darfur receives much play in the U.S. media (though many would argue it's still not nearly enough), it's Somalia that generates the most intensity in the Horn. This was initially surprising to us, but it became quickly clear that the immediate next steps the international community takes in regard to Somalia will have a critical and lasting impact in that region, and likely for the Global War on Terror.

It is unfortunate that under USG policy, we have no presence in Somalia, or even approval for officials to travel there. Large parts of the country are relatively safe, and our interests would be much better served by direct communication. The Ethiopians have troops in the south, in an attempt to prop up the Transitional Federal Government (TFG), and there are relatively moderate forces in control in Somaliland and Puntland. By our absence, we lose valuable opportunity to build relationships with moderate forces which are attempting to counter radical forces in the south. While one might argue that the situation is not safe enough for US civilians, we heard repeatedly from your troops and CJTF-HOA leadership of a desire to be in country – and the military is clearly better prepared to protect itself in such an environment.

The current UN arms embargo, by all accounts (including those of US officials in the region) is only hurting the interim government left defenseless as a result. The Islamic Courts are unaffected by the embargo and benefit by their illegality, receiving arms through the long and unprotected coastline. Considering that this government is also internationally recognized, denying it arms in the face of strong radical forces makes little sense. As best as we can tell, this issue is lost among other more prominent issues at the UN, including the succession of a new Secretary General.

If we fail to find further ways to strengthen the TFG, there's almost no question that the Ethiopians will invade Somalia in much greater numbers, possibly encouraging Eritrea to invade Ethiopia, Somalia to move on the Ogaden, and further destabilizing an important front in our fight against extremism, as well as unleashing massive humanitarian crises.

Even since our visit, the situation continues to deteriorate. It is not even clear that with any amount of help the TFG is even viable. Somalis are drawn to success and victory, which continues to fall on the side of the Courts. But we must do what we can now to stop the spread of the Courts across Southern Somalia. The BENS travelers worry that in 10 years we could wake up to regret not doing more in this important part of the world, as the combination of a Taliban-like government and an AQ presence is a formula we have seen before.

SUDAN

If there is to be a solution to the situation in Sudan, it needs international participation. Even the deputy chairman of the African Union admits that AU nations do not have the capacity or the know-how to field a permanent peacekeeping mission. Additionally, we were told that the Chinese are the major UN hurdle to more intense action in Sudan. Yet it is painfully clear from what we saw on this trip that the Chinese are not suffering at all in the region as a result of their obstruction. Nobody cares they are blocking action, but only that they bring investment.

CJTF-HOA MISSION

Our trip was organized to showcase the morphing mission of CJTF-HOA – a mission on which we'd been briefed during earlier CENTCOM visits. Still, we came away highly impressed with what we saw. While Marines were initially forward deployed in this region to stem the predicted flood of terrorists following the invasion of Iraq, CENTCOM had the vision and ability to alter its strategy in response to evolving conditions on the ground. And to those who wonder if the military should be involved in nation building and humanitarian assistance, or is even capable of such work, the Horn of Africa proves the success of this as an important new element in fighting extremism through.

During our visit, we encountered further proof that “all politics is local.” It was clear to us that our efforts there are improving the image of the United States. Equally impressive on us was the great pride that our young troops are taking in the work they're doing. They see clearly and directly the positive impact this kind of interaction creates. This is all accomplished with what is a relatively lean operation of only 1800 Americans with \$15 million to spend. By contrast, in Ethiopia alone, for example, NGOs combined will spend over \$2 billion.

In order that we continue expanding on the successes in the command, it's clear that more flexibility and empowerment needs to be pushed down into the field. You have put the right people in this command, and we need to continue to free those who are on the ground and doing the face-to-face work to act on creative solutions they devise, but cannot currently implement because of bureaucratic and procedural impediments.

We are somewhat concerned, however, with seeing that the military, as in other parts of the world, is forced to assume a role that might be fulfilled better and cheaper by the State Department if it had increased resources (there are, for example, more military personnel than civilian at the US Mission in Kenya) and a more regional outlook. While the borders of this continent are more troublesome than in any other region in the world, our civilian foreign policy apparatus is more readily designed for bi-lateral relations when multilateral relations are critical. CENCTOM recently hosted a conference of regional US Ambassadors, many of whom were meeting for the first time. This is particularly troublesome as it impacts our strategy towards Somalia. While the future of that country greatly impacts all of its neighbors, it seems that US policy is tightly controlled through the single lens of our embassy in Nairobi, rather impeding the work of the military or neighboring embassies.

The US military also benefits from engrained strategic thinking and planning that strengthen long term outlooks. The NGO world, in particular, is forced to focus on each new crisis as it arises, inhibiting from spending as much time working to change the systemic issues that often bring about these crises. This long term planning is critical if we're ever to break this part of the world from the cycle that has it, by almost any measurement, losing ground in all development metrics.

Whatever our intentions, it is obvious we have not adapted to the 21st Century reality that there are more NGOs at play, and that we must better coordinate with them, and take their resources and strategies into account. And until the State Department properly organizes itself regionally, and is sufficiently resourced by Congress, the military seems best positioned to provide the necessary coordination within the current environment.

TWO AFTERTHOUGHTS

- **CORRUPTION**

In our travels throughout this region, as well as the rest of Africa, the issue of corruption quickly finds its way into every conversation. While for perfectly legitimate reasons, US companies are none-the-less hamstrung in doing business while other international companies are fast developing relationships and growing market share. Because economic development and commercial interaction are so crucial to achieving security and fostering relationships, we need to do more than just pass laws that enforce ethical practices on the part of US businesses. We need to aggressively work at overturning corruption in these countries. And the issue of corruption cuts two ways: the payoffs required to get business, and the impossibility of enforcing private contracts. The need for a strong and clear rule of law is essential to fight this problem.

- CHINA

The Chinese are everywhere in Africa. To the extent that our relationships with African countries are greatly cemented through economic cooperation, and that economic development is a cornerstone of security and stability, the increasing influence of China is a serious concern. Chinese investment is made easier, of course, because they don't have the same legal restrictions US companies face in dealing with the high levels of corruption in these countries.

There are signs of some tension on the continent with the Chinese. While they do invest heavily in these countries, they also tend to bring in their own labor, so that the impact on local unemployment is minimal. Even worse, the involvement of the Chinese merchant class actually takes jobs away from local businesses. In a more macro sense, some African leaders are already starting to worry about the serious strings that come attached to Chinese investment. Reaping the short term gains of Chinese investment versus US investment might produce very complicated problems in the intermediate and long term development of these economies.

In the meantime, though, the Chinese are quickly making substantial inroads in Africa. In Kenya, for example, there were four times as many US businesses in Kenya ten years ago as there are now. Meanwhile, there were three Chinese businesses there three years ago, and there are 150 today. They Chinese also are competing very strongly for the "hearts and minds" that CJTF-HOA is pursuing. As one official told us, "we like the Americans because they tell us what we need, but we like the Chinese more because they give it to us." And the Chinese are building infrastructure in a very visible way: roads, schools, stadiums, etc.

In the time that African countries might modernize their business practices, Chinese firms could develop significant competitive advantages across the continent. This is particularly worrisome if the Chinese economy continues to grow as robustly as it currently is, allowing the government to maintain its generous aid programs.

THE PROPAGANDA WAR

We hear on many of our travels, and this trip was no exception, that the US is losing the "propaganda war." Increasingly, Muslims believe that our country and our policy is anti-Islam. And while many in the world have thought of our foreign policy as "value-based," even if they did not agree with our strategies, our missteps in such places as Guantanamo and Abu Ghraib contradict that. Still, there is confusion as to whether these increasingly negative views are

directed at our country or at our government. Most seem to believe it is more focused on the existing Administration, leading us to believe there is still time to stem this tide before it is too deeply ingrained.

End.