

## The Trump Administration's New Africa Strategy

Remarks by National Security Advisor Ambassador John R. Bolton.

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Well, Kim, thanks very much, and thanks to you and Kay for inviting me here. I'm delighted again to be here at the Heritage, an institution that really has contributed so much to the public policy debate for many decades now in the United States. And I'm particularly pleased to be here to unveil the Trump administration's new Africa Strategy, which the President approved yesterday, and which the administration will begin executing immediately.

This strategy is the result of an intensive interagency process, and reflects the core tenets of President Trump's foreign policy doctrine. Importantly, the strategy remains true to his central campaign promise to put the interests of the American People first, both at home and abroad.

The White House is proud to finalize this strategy during the second year of President Trump's first term, about two years earlier than the prior administration's release of its Africa strategy.

We have prioritized developing this document because we understand that lasting stability, prosperity, independence, and security on the African continent are in the national security interest of the United States.

Under our new approach, every decision we make, every policy we pursue, and every dollar of aid we spend will further U.S. priorities in the region. In particular, the strategy addresses three core U.S. interests on the continent:

First, advancing U.S. trade and commercial ties with nations across the region to the benefit of both the United States and Africa.

We want our economic partners in the region to thrive, prosper, and control their own destinies. In America's economic dealings, we ask only for reciprocity, never for subservience.

Second, countering the threat from Radical Islamic Terrorism and violent conflict.

ISIS, al-Qaida, and their affiliates all operate and recruit on the African continent, plotting attacks against American citizens and targets. Any sound U.S. strategy toward Africa must address this serious threat in a comprehensive way.

And third, we will ensure that U.S. taxpayer dollars for aid are used efficiently and effectively.

The United States will no longer provide indiscriminate assistance across the entire continent, without focus or prioritization. And, we will no longer support unproductive, unsuccessful, and unaccountable U.N. peacekeeping missions.

We want something more to show for Americans' hard-earned taxpayer dollars.

Under our new Africa strategy, we will target U.S. funding toward key countries and particular strategic objectives. All U.S. aid on the continent will advance U.S. interests, and help African nations move toward self-reliance.

Our first priority, enhancing U.S. economic ties with the region, is not only essential to improving opportunities for American workers and businesses; it is also vital to safeguarding the economic independence of African states and protecting U.S. national security interests.

Great power competitors, namely China and Russia, are rapidly expanding their financial and political influence across Africa. They are deliberately and aggressively targeting their investments in the region to gain a competitive advantage over the United States.

From 2016-2017, China's foreign direct investment toward Africa totaled \$6.4 billion dollars. And, over the past several years, China has devoted considerable state-directed and state-supported financing to projects in the region.

China uses bribes, opaque agreements, and the strategic use of debt to hold states in Africa captive to Beijing's wishes and demands. Its investment ventures are riddled with corruption, and do not meet the same environmental or ethical standards as U.S. developmental programs.

Such predatory actions are sub-components of broader Chinese strategic initiatives, including "One Belt, One Road"—a plan to develop a series of trade routes leading to and from China with the ultimate goal of advancing Chinese global dominance.

In Africa, we are already seeing the disturbing effects of China's quest to obtain more political, economic, and military power.

The nation of Zambia, for example, is currently in debt to China to the tune of \$6 to \$10 billion dollars. China is now poised to take over Zambia's national power and utility company in order to collect on Zambia's financial obligations.

Similarly, from 2014 to 2016, Djibouti's external public debt-to-GDP ratio ballooned from fifty percent to eighty-five percent, with most of that debt owed to China.

In 2017, China established a military base in Djibouti that is only miles from our U.S. base, Camp Lemonnier, which supports critical U.S. operations to counter violent terrorist organizations in East Africa.

In May, U.S. officials accused China of using military-grade lasers from this base to target and distract U.S. pilots on ten different occasions. Two of our American pilots suffered eye injuries from exposure to laser beams.

And soon, Djibouti may hand over control of the Doraleh Container Terminal, a strategically-located shipping port on the Red Sea, to Chinese state-owned enterprises.

Should this occur, the balance of power in the Horn of Africa—astride major arteries of maritime trade between Europe, the Middle East, and South Asia—would shift in favor of China. And, our U.S. military personnel at Camp Lemonnier could face even further challenges in their efforts to protect the American people.

Russia, for its part, is also seeking to increase its influence in the region through corrupt economic dealings. Across the continent, Russia advances its political and

economic relationships with little regard for the rule of law or accountable and transparent governance.

It continues to sell arms and energy in exchange for votes at the United Nations—votes that keep strongmen in power, undermine peace and security, and run counter to the best interests of the African people.

Russia also continues to extract natural resources from the region for its own benefit.

In short, the predatory practices pursued by China and Russia stunt economic growth in Africa; threaten the financial independence of African nations; inhibit opportunities for U.S. investment; interfere with U.S. military operations; and pose a significant threat to U.S. national security interests.

Equally concerning at this time, the lack of economic progress in the region has accompanied the proliferation of Radical Islamic Terrorism, and other forms of violent conflict, across Africa.

Countering these serious threats is the second priority under our new Africa strategy.

In recent years, ISIS, al-Qaida, and other terrorists operating in Africa have increased the lethality of their attacks, expanded into new areas, and repeatedly targeted U.S. citizens and interests.

In Mali, JNIM, Jama'at Nusrat al-Islam wal-Muslimin—which describes itself as an al-Qaida affiliate—is increasing in strength and has killed and wounded scores of peacekeepers, partner forces, and innocent civilians, in addition to kidnapping Westerners and threatening U.S. allies.

In Libya, the local ISIS-affiliate has found fertile ground to recruit new terrorists and plot attacks against the United States.

In South Sudan, an ongoing civil war has ravaged a young nation, displaced millions, and led to the deaths of hundreds of thousands of people.

The continuing threat from terrorism and other violent conflicts across the region puts American lives at risk, and drains vital American resources.

Between 2014 and 2018, the United States provided approximately \$3.76 billion dollars in humanitarian aid to South Sudan and refugees in neighboring countries.

This number represents only a small amount of the total aid that the United States devotes to Africa.

In fact, in Fiscal Year 2017, the Department of State and USAID provided approximately \$8.7 billion dollars in development, security, and food assistance to Africa.

In Fiscal Year 2016, we provided approximately \$8.3 billion dollars.

Between 1995 and 2006, U.S. aid to Africa was roughly equal to the amount of assistance provided by all other donors combined.

Unfortunately, billions upon billions of U.S. taxpayer dollars have not achieved the desired effects.

They have not stopped the scourge of terrorism, radicalism, and violence.

They have not prevented other powers, such as China and Russia, from taking advantage of African states to increase their own power and influence.

And, they have not led to stable and transparent governance, economic viability, and increasing development across the region.

From now on, the United States will not tolerate this longstanding pattern of aid without effect, assistance without accountability, and relief without reform.

Instead, we are pursuing a new path, one that, we hope, finally gets results.

Americans are a generous people, but we insist that our money is put to good use.

Our third priority, therefore, is ensuring that all U.S. assistance dollars sent to Africa are used efficiently and effectively to advance peace, stability, independence, and prosperity in the region.

Here are some of the specific, bold actions we will take under our new strategy to address the three priority areas I have just highlighted.

To expand our economic relationships in the region, we are developing a new initiative called “Prosper Africa,” which will support U.S. investment across the continent, grow Africa’s middle class, and improve the overall business climate in the region.

In addition, we will encourage African leaders to choose high-quality, transparent, inclusive, and sustainable foreign investment projects, including those from the United States. We will leverage our expanded and modernized development tools to support access to financing and provide strong alternatives to external state-directed initiatives.

America’s vision for the region is one of independence, self-reliance, and growth—not dependency, domination, and debt.

We want African nations to succeed, flourish, and remain independent in fact and not just in theory.

In the coming years and months, we also intend to pursue modern, comprehensive trade agreements on the continent that ensure fair and reciprocal exchange between the United States and the nations of Africa. We will begin these negotiations on a bilateral basis, and focus on creating mutually beneficial partnerships.

Our new economic initiatives in Africa will help support American jobs and expand market access for U.S. exports, while promoting sustainable growth in African countries.

We will focus our economic efforts on African governments that act with us as strategic partners, and, which are striving toward improved governance and transparent business practices.

As our partner nations develop economically, they will be better prepared to address a range of security threats, including terrorism and militant violence.

Under our new strategy, we will also take several additional steps to help our African friends fight terrorism and strengthen the rule of law. We will assist key African

governments in building the capacity of partner forces and security institutions to provide effective and sustainable security and law enforcement services to their citizens.

Our goal is for the nations of the region to take ownership over peace and security in their own neighborhood.

The G5 Sahel Joint Force, comprised of Mauritania, Niger, Chad, Burkina Faso, and Mali, which the United States supports, is a great example of the enormous potential for African joint security cooperation.

The G5 Sahel Joint Force is seeking to build regional capability to combat terrorism, transnational organized crime, and human trafficking in the Sahel.

As this force gains capacity, G5 countries must remain in the driver's seat—this initiative cannot be outsourced to the U.N. for funding and other support.

We want to see more cooperative regional security organizations like these emerge around the world.

As part of our new Africa strategy, the United States will also reevaluate its support for U.N. peacekeeping missions. We will only back effective and efficient operations that we will seek to streamline, reconfigure, or terminate missions that are unable to meet their own mandate or facilitate lasting peace. Our objective is to resolve conflicts, not freeze them in perpetuity.

And, we will not provide legitimacy to missions that give large payouts to countries sending poorly-equipped soldiers who provide insufficient protection to vulnerable populations on the ground.

The sexual exploitation and abuse by UN peacekeepers of the very populations that they were sent to protect has been, and remains, completely unacceptable. Continued malfeasance without consequences damages the integrity of the entire U.N. peacekeeping system. If we are truly committed to protecting innocent life in conflict zones, then we must insist on accountable, robust, and effective peacekeeping operations.

In April, the United States did just that regarding the decades-old U.N. peacekeeping mission in Western Sahara. We demanded a six month, rather than annual, renewal period for the mission, and we insisted on a stronger, more effective mandate tied to substantive political progress.

Because of our actions, the parties to the conflict and key neighboring countries agreed to meet for the first time since 2012. Last week, the U.N. Envoy hosted these talks in Geneva and the participants agreed to hold additional talks in early next year.

Moving forward, we will also ensure that bilateral U.S. security assistance targets nations that act as responsible regional stakeholders, and nations where state failure or weakness would pose a direct threat to the United States and our citizens. We want to use American dollars in the most efficient way to protect the interests of the American people.

Accordingly, we will make certain that ALL aid to the region—whether for security, humanitarian, or development needs—advances these U.S. interests.

Countries that receive U.S. assistance must invest in health and education, encourage accountable and transparent governance, support fiscal transparency, and promote the rule of law.

The administration will not allow hard-earned taxpayer dollars to fund corrupt autocrats, who use the money to fill their coffers at the expense of their people, or commit gross human rights abuses.

For example, the United States is now reviewing its assistance to South Sudan to ensure that our aid does not prolong the conflict or facilitate predatory behavior. We will not provide loans or more American resources to a South Sudanese government led by the same morally bankrupt leaders, who perpetuate the horrific violence and immense human suffering in South Sudan.

The administration is also developing a new foreign assistance strategy to improve the effectiveness of American foreign aid worldwide. American foreign assistance was originally designed to counter the Soviet Union during the Cold War, and most recently to fight terrorism after 9/11.

Today, we need to make adjustments to address the pressing challenge of great power competition, and to correct past mistakes in structuring our funding.

In developing our strategy, we are revisiting the foundational principles of the Marshall Plan. The Marshall Plan furthered American interests, bypassed the United Nations, and targeted key sectors of foreign economies rather than dissipating aid across hundreds of programs.

Our new foreign assistance strategy will ensure that all U.S. foreign aid, in every corner of the globe, advances U.S. interests.

Our goal is to move recipient states toward self-reliance, and prevent long-term dependency.

Structural reforms will likely be critical, including practicing fiscal responsibility, promoting fair and reciprocal trade, deregulating economies, and supporting the private sector.

We should emphasize bilateral mechanisms to maintain maximum American control over every American dollar spent.

Less needy recipients should graduate from foreign assistance, and assistance should decline to countries and organizations making poor policy choices.

In addition, we should target resources toward areas where we have the most impact to ensure efficient use of taxpayer dollars.

Countries that repeatedly vote against the United States in international forums, or take action counter to U.S. interests, should not receive generous American foreign aid.

The United States will respect the independence of other nations in providing humanitarian, security, and development assistance—we are not among those powers that pursue dollars for dependency. However, we draw the line at funding causes that harm our interests and our citizens.

Around the world, the United States seeks partners who are self-reliant, independent, and strong—nations that respect the interests of their people, the rights of their neighbors, and the principle of fairness and reciprocity in all agreements.

Under our new Africa Strategy, we will expand economic ties on the basis of mutual respect. We will help African nations take control of their own economic destinies and their own security needs. And, we will ensure that all U.S. foreign assistance in the region gets results for the American people.

I am honored to have had the opportunity to highlight the details of our plans here at Heritage today, and I look forward to taking your questions.

Thank you very much.