Synopsis and Background Information

The U.S. is apparently the only nation that divides the planet into military zones. In February 2007, Washington announced the creation of AFRICOM – The African Command – now headquartered in Stuttgart, Germany, with a mandate “to conduct sustained security engagement through military-to-military programs, military-sponsored activities, and other military operations as directed, to promote a stable and secure African environment in support of U.S. foreign policy.”

More than a dozen governments in Africa have publicly and vehemently decried AFRICOM, not to speak of the multiple civil society organizations around the world who consistently articulate the reasons for their hostility to the new institution. Critics maintain that the fortification of America’s military footprint in Africa is a move to better control oil resources, contain China’s voracious economic ambitions south of the Sahara, and turn Africa into a major front in the fight against "terrorism".

Does AFRICOM have a war-fighting mission? It is quite difficult to tell from the record since it only fully/officially assumed its responsibilities less than 2 years ago on October 1, 2008. Although the U.S. Army has uniquely effectual capabilities to conduct “nation-building” operations in Africa, it is equally clear that military-led operations always come at a greater cost than civilian-sponsored programs. Foreign uniformed personnel will almost systematically produce negative emotional reactions among the populations that they are supposed to help, and the agencies specialized in development lose credibility every time the military is involved. Furthermore, there are historical reasons for an extreme wariness of armed forces being in the vanguard of statecraft –most conspicuously in Black Africa.

Policy Challenges

U.S. foreign policy has visibly not taken an optimal measure of the telluric changes that have happened in Africa during the last decade. One could argue that political instability and disastrous development strategies throughout the continent have, at their core, always been characterized by weak and/or illegitimate law enforcement institutions.

Endemic problems like inadequate training, incompetent leadership, extremely low salaries, and stressful working conditions all combine into perfect recipes for structural situations of corruption and abuse. Many argue that AFRICOM is probably not the best response to these challenges.
Meanwhile, with close to half a century of experience, the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) currently centers all of its actions in sub-Saharan Africa around a principle known as *transformational diplomacy* with the following priorities:

1. Enhance strategic partnerships
2. Consolidate democratic transitions
3. Bolster fragile states
4. Strengthen regional and sub-regional organizations
5. Strengthen regional security capacity
6. Strengthen Africa counterterrorism cooperation and capacity
7. Stimulate Africa’s economic development and growth
8. Implement presidential initiatives
9. Focus on humanitarian and development assistance programs

“Sounds like a plan,” doesn’t it?

**Expected Outcome of Your Deliberations**

1. Create and propose the general framework for ONE concrete, realistic project to implement at least 3 of the 9 USAID priorities outlined above. *Country/region? Timeframe? Institutional arrangements? Budgetary estimations? Any other considerations?*

2. In addition, draft in unequivocal terms a very brief "memo" (2 sentences at most) to the U.S. Department of State suggesting why, given the on-going global geopolitical realities, AFRICOM should or should not be eliminated.