
Africa Contingency Operations Training and Assistance (ACOTA)

By

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Stuttgart, Germany

The Africa Contingency Operations Training and Assistance (ACOTA) program, managed and funded by the Department of State (DoS), is an initiative designed to improve African ability to respond quickly to crises by providing selected militaries with the training and equipment required to execute humanitarian or peace support operations.

Once trained, forces can be deployed into multinational units to conduct operations under auspices of the Africa Union (AU), the United Nations (UN), or regional security organizations. On-the-ground training is supervised under the Department of State, while U.S. Africa Command provides mentors and advisors as requested.

Background

ACOTA is the successor to the Africa Crisis Response Initiative (ACRI) which, in 1997, began the U.S. peacekeeping training program in four countries of Africa. Since then, ACOTA's membership has grown to include 21 African partners.

Though ACOTA's immediate goal is to support the establishment of the AU's African Standby Force/ Brigades by June 2010, its long-term objective is to assist the AU and individual troop contributing countries in its peacekeeping operations for as long as it is needed.



An Initial Entry Training Class prepares to give honors during a pass and review ceremony at the activation of a new infantry battalion with the Armed Forces of Liberia at the Barclay Training Center in Monrovia, Liberia, August 29, 2008. The battalion trained with the assistance of the United States and the international community. The Liberian Armed Forces have been activated under the approved 2008 National Defense Act. (Photo by Petty Officer First Class Daniel P. Lapierre, U.S. Africa Command)

Training roughly 20 battalions per year, ACOTA tailors its programs to match the individual needs and capabilities of each country. ACOTA supports peacekeeping operations in Africa by:

- Training African soldiers on topics including convoy escort procedures, refugee management, and small-unit command skills
- Overseeing exercises for battalion, brigade, and multinational force headquarters personnel
- Providing equipment to partner nations, such as mine detectors, field medical equipment, uniforms, and water purification devices
- Conducting refresher training periodically to ensure that trained units maintain their capabilities
- Training African trainers who in turn train their own nation's soldiers in peacekeeping skills

Facts and Figures

Since 2004 ACOTA has trained approximately 45,000 African soldiers and 3,200 African trainers who have supported deployments to peacekeeping operations in the Democratic Republic of Congo, Liberia, Burundi, Cote d'Ivoire, Darfur, Somalia, and Lebanon.

Rwanda is a prime illustration of ACOTA's success. Its forces in Darfur are recognized as a capable and highly affective military unit, due in large part to ACOTA training. Additionally, nearly all new Rwandan peacekeeping forces are indigenously trained by ACOTA-trained instructors.

In the near-term, the number of ACOTA partners can be expected to rise as the demand for African peacekeeping missions increases. Thus, ACOTA remains a unique and critical tool that has the ability to provide a long-term security solution.

Conclusion

U.S. Africa Command recognizes its participation and support to ACOTA as the primary tool for building African partnership capacity for peacekeeping operations.

As such, the Command and its components will continue to support ACOTA by:

- Providing military mentors/advisors to participate in these missions (to date, roughly 300 mentors have been provided)
- Coordinating ACOTA missions into U.S. Africa Command's overall theater security cooperation efforts
- Cooperating with European nations interested in partnering with peacekeeping training