

TRANSCRIPT

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**Commander, US Africa Command**

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**DWG:** Let me begin by saying thank you to our guest, General Thomas D. Waldhauser, United States Marine Corps. He's the Commander of US Africa Command. Sir, we do appreciate you making the time to meet with us on Monday morning on your trip to Washington, DC. I'm sure we'll find a way to drag an hour's worth of useful information out of you.

Sir, I'll go ahead and start as the moderator. I wanted to get a little bit more fidelity from one of your comments on Friday which was that when you have your Defense Chiefs Meeting in Stuttgart in April, you said one of the things that you're going to be looking for was some additional insight on what the nations in Africa are looking for in terms of more Africa Command or less Africa Command. But from your perspective, what's your position there? What do you believe the command needs more of or less of on the continent right now?

**General Waldhauser:** First of all, thanks for inviting me here this morning. In all seriousness. It's a great opportunity to talk about AFRICOM. And I know that with all that's going on in the news sometimes, especially when we're located in Stuttgart, sometimes we get lost a little bit in some of the discussion. But this is a great opportunity to talk about what we do in the continent and what happens kind of on a daily basis. Because on any given day there's five or six thousand soldiers, sailors, airmen and marines on the continent doing all kinds of work. We do not have assigned forces, and that's fine, but we do have on any given day a lot of activity going on.

With regards to the Chief of Defense Conference in April, one of the things we talked about over the last few months in Stuttgart is how do we kind of get everybody together and make sure that there's a central message and a common understanding of what AFRICOM is trying to accomplish, and how AFRICOM can contribute to whether it's

capacity building or any type of violent extremist organization support for these various countries. How can we do that better?

So one of the ideas we came up with was to try to get everybody in from the continent and get them all in the same room at the same time because it's never been done before. And we thought it would be a good forum to do that. The important thing that we talked, how to frame this, is we want to make sure we bring the Chiefs of Defense to see us, that it's not just necessarily a one-way conversation from us. Because that wouldn't be helpful, and I think that we have a lot to learn, a lot that we can better understand our partner nations.

So we want to bring them together, we want to hear what they have to say. And you know, on their own they've done some things, for example in the Sahel, they have the G5 that's designed to get after the AQIM threat in the Sahel region. And they're looking not necessarily for us to become a dominant force there, but just the fact that we would support their efforts and what we can do to help them synchronize their efforts and perhaps provide some of the advice and assistance is something that would be beneficial to them. So we're interested in how they're doing. We're interested in what they would like to see from us. So that's just one example on this whole theme of them talking to us and how we can better strategically set our framework to assist various countries in the various regions.

In some respects the problems they all have are the same, in some respects they're very different, and we're just very excited about this. I think, you know, we have 53 countries, I think we had invites to 50. And I think now we're up to pretty close to 40, I think in terms of RSVPs of those who will attend. So it's a day and a half conference. Various speakers. Various topics. And we're pretty excited about doing that.

**DWG:** Good morning, General. Thanks for doing this.

I wanted to follow up on something that you said on Friday at the Pentagon in your news conference. Speaking about Russia and Libya, you cited the concern, and even grave concern about Russia's activity in the area. What precisely gives you this cause for concern? Can you share with us?

**General Waldhauser:** First of all, I think for a long time now the Russian influence in Libya is something that is readily apparent and something that we have to understand and deal with. And when you look at the factions right now in Libya, trying to come to a political solution in a very complex environment, obviously the House of Representatives and the Libyan National Army, which primarily Khalifa Haftar is the leader. They're obviously in opposition to the UN-brokered agreement that has President Sarraj and the Government of National Accord, trying to make their way forward to unify the country.

So when we see perhaps influence on the side that we essentially are trying to accommodate. In other words, we have backed, our official policy is to back the Government of National Accord. When it appears that the Russians and Haftar have

negotiations, have discussions, this obviously becomes concerning to us. So the idea of the Russian influence in Libya, which may be contrary to our objectives, is something that does concern us.

**DWG:** But this is only a guess, as far as I understand. Have you even tried to get in touch with them over this, and figure out what exactly is going on?

**General Waldhauser:** Well, on the political side of this is, I have not. On the military side, I have discussed it with Russian military members. On the political side I can't say what has been tried or not tried there. I do know, though, that the bottom line of all this is, is that in order to really stave off any type of civil war inside Libya, it's very very important to get these two parties together, the Government of National Accord and the House of Representatives need to come together to make some accommodations in order for a political solution to move forward.

**DWG:** And the last one, if I may, sir, as far as I understand there are U.S. forces on the ground in Libya as we speak. I don't know if the Russians have their forces there or if they publicly announced they have. Do you have an interaction with, I mean mil-to-mil interaction between those forces that you have on the ground and the Russians in the vicinity or in Libya, if they are in Libya?

**General Waldhauser:** Well, I think it's, it is common knowledge that we have a small number of forces on the ground, and we've had some there for some time in order to assist us in our efforts to support the Government of National Accord, for example, with the liberation of ISIS from Sirte. So there has been a small number of U.S. forces on the ground there. But with regards to our interaction with Russian troops, there's really nothing to say on that at this point in time.

**DWG:** Caroline?

**DWG:** I wanted to ask a broad question about the future and where you see AFRICOM going in the next say five to ten years. You in testimony have said that the U.S. is interested in preserving the [INSCOM] mission for longer, and acknowledge that Libya is going to be a long-term, going to require a long-term solution. And also [inaudible] more cooperative basing agreements with bases in places like Niger. So what do you see the future problems of AFRICOM being?

**General Waldhauser:** I think long term in Africa is a very interesting concept. As a military guy who likes to get things done and view things, long term in terms of perhaps your time in the position or [billet] you're in. That's one thing I've had to adjust since I've been in this command. I mean when you say long term in Africa, you really have to understand and define what long term means.

You mentioned Libya is a long-term solution and that is something that is really step by step that will take time to make progress.

I think when you look at some of the challenge that we have on the continent with regards to capacity building of various militaries in order to handle problems on their own, this is a long-term setting.

So I think that we have to understand that. I think that we've always had a philosophy that small investments will go a long way if we have some strategic patience. And I think that's something we have to remind ourselves every day. These problems in Africa with regards to the demographics and where the population lies 10, 15, 20 years down the road, these are all growing and it's very very important that we understand that. I go back to a common theme that I always talk about, is that in order to have a secure, prosperous, stable Africa, we've got to find a way to provide for jobs, livelihood and so on for the very very huge youth bulge that is there now and will remain there for quite some time.

In other words, they're going to have, you need to have security, but the stability will come as you have development. So we take this approach of defense, development, in order to provide for a very large number of people who need to have a job, need to have a livelihood, because this contributes to them joining violent extremist organizations, it contributes to the migration problem, and as you can tell, these are key items that we have to really pay attention to in order to make sure that we have a stable Africa.

**DWG:** Okay. To follow up on that, so in the next five years or so would you be interested in having the [inaudible], personnel resources and other resources assigned to AFRICOM? Or do you think perhaps that investment will be better [inaudible] African governments, states, the USAID, [inaudible]?

**General Waldhauser:** I think they're tied together. Development is a big part of what we need and what we try to foster. So you need to have security, which requires some security forces, whether they be military or police, but you need to have a secure environment in any one of these places in order for development to take place because everything comes from security.

So on the strictly military side it's important that we have developed and contribute to the training, if you will, of armed forces that are able to handle their own security issues on their own. And then, that buys time for the ability for some of these other programs, for the soft power side of this, the USAID program, job development and the like, gives them the environment for some of these things to take hold to provide for their stability and prosperity.

**DWG:** My question is about technology. I was wondering if you have any kind of technology needs, technology gaps in AFRICOM? Particularly you maybe need more ISR, maybe some communications, things like that. Would you be able to name a few things you would like to get that maybe industry could help you with?

**General Waldhauser:** The issue of technology I suppose has at least two sides of it. One of it is technology for us, and the other is technology for our partners. Let's talk about our partners first, just for a second.

One of the things that we have to look at when we start talking about equipment or needs of other armed forces, it's important that the particular country that we're working with has the ability to absorb whatever technology or whatever equipment we may provide for them. It's very very important. Some countries are a little bit more farther advanced, places like Tunisia and Morocco. When they buy weapon systems from the United States they are already prepared and understand the value of having infrastructure, a training pipeline, the logistical pipeline behind them to make sure the equipment that they buy is maintained and used and it's going to be around for a while. Other countries aren't so fortunate, so we need to make sure we spend time in what we call defense institution building to ensure that well beyond the life cycle of a piece of equipment, whether it's a vehicle, for example, or perhaps some type of rifle or whatever, we need to make sure they understand the requirements to have the logistical background or logistical infrastructure. Parts, spare parts, repairs and the like.

Technology for us, I mean one of the shortcomings that we have on the continent, it's no secret, it's been that way really for some time now, is we would like to have additional ISR resources in order to help us develop intelligence in the various violent extremist organizations. However, what we have, though, I think we do a very good job of being innovative in terms of how and where we base them, get the most out of what we have. And I think when you look at the urgency of the threat versus coming to the European continent or coming to the United States from various regions in AFRICOM, I think we're okay, right now in terms of what we have relative to the timeliness of the information that we try to develop.

So obviously, we want more, but at the same time I think that you know, we understand where we are with regards to the main effort. Iraq, Syria, for example. I think we do fine with what we have.

**DWG:** When you say ISR, are you referring to like unmanned aircraft? Or are you referring to other systems?

**General Waldhauser:** All of the above. It's more than just video. The whole spectrum of what can be gathered, how we can develop intelligence is something that when I say ISR, it's more than just a video camera of what's going on on the ground.

**DWG:** Two questions. The first is from your news conference last week where you talked about there are only four or five instances you said where you had to intervene in strike operations in Sirte. I'm wondering if you can walk us through a little bit of the mechanics of that. It may not be the last time you get involved in Libya. And what, give some flavor of what those were and how it worked otherwise. I'll do my follow-up after that.

**General Waldhauser:** Sure. Going back to Sirte, which started on the first of August and lasted until the 18<sup>th</sup> of December, four and a half months or so. Obviously at the request of the GNA we came along with our ability to do precision fire. Some would call it an air campaign. That's probably a reach. I would characterize it more as close air

support in an urban environment. It wasn't necessarily an air campaign, it was really close air support in an urban environment.

So we have to have certain authorities given to us. And I would just start by saying that in an urban environment providing precision fires, the only way you can make that happen is by decentralization of decision-making in order to be timely, in order to be able to meet the demands of the people on the ground because if you kept the decision-making at a higher level and it was a centralized process you would really, you would be almost irrelevant in terms of that type of environment.

These days, in an asymmetric environment where you have small groups of insurgents on the ground and precision with regards to making sure that structures are not needlessly taken apart, and certainly with the concern of civilian casualties, it's very very important that our ability to provide precision fires against an enemy who is really using IEDs and all kinds of rudimentary techniques, there's a part of asymmetric warfare in there which really is an advantage to us.

So with regards to authorities, at the time we were given what's called Active Area of Hostility, that whole area of Sirte pretty much and a little bit surrounding that was declared an Active Area of Hostility which gave AFRICOM the ability to conduct fires within that geographical space under our control.

And the framework had to do with pretty much, has to do with certainty, meaning that we had to know who we were firing upon, we had to make sure that they were in fact ISIS individuals. We had to be concerned about the needless destruction of structures and infrastructure. We obviously had to be concerned about civilians. So there are constraints on our ability to do certain things which, of course, is why precision is very very important.

As I said, the ability to power down those decisions, though, is what's very very important. And I would just say that the individuals and how that worked, individuals who had the authority to call these strikes, you know, on a moment's notice, had a very very thorough understanding of what the rules of engagement, if you will, and what the framework that we had to operate under. And to make a long story short, to really put it in a concise way. We had to know what we were shooting at. It had to be somebody of ISIS and we had to be very very certain that civilian casualties and needless destruction of infrastructure was taken into consideration.

So I, you know, over time when you watch a constant eye in the sky, an unblinking eye on various parts of Sirte you get a very good pattern of life. You understand where civilians are. You understand where ISIS is located. I wouldn't ever say it's easy, but your ability to make decisions in a quick and a timely manner is certainly, you benefit from having this constant eye over the target.

So the decision-making process was powered down to those individuals in the chain of command who were very quickly able to make decisions. And I think, and I've said this before. I think what's interesting is how you, you know, urban warfare in an asymmetric

environment today. You have, for example, an MQ-9 that's launched from somewhere on the planet up over Sirte. We're viewing that at various locations in Libya, in the United States, in Stuttgart, and along that chain of command there are decisions being made as to whether those targets should be struck or not. It's really pretty amazing. And it also is a testimony to the professional maturity and the professionalism of our forces who make those decisions.

So I would watch in our Joint Operations Center in Stuttgart. I would pop in periodically, watch how these things took place, and it's, you get a lot of confidence in terms of people who really know what they're doing. You get a lot of confidence in people who are going to great pains to make sure that those rules of engagement are adhered to.

Interestingly, we had about 500 strikes in that five-month period and to our knowledge we had no civilian casualties.

Where I got involved on a handful of occasions, to get to your, a long way to get to your question here, is there were various categories of targets that for the most part, decisions were powered down. But, for example, if we had to take out a building because there was perhaps a sniper in there that was impeding progress, causing casualties, and there was no other way to get around it after they tried many different ways to take out that target. If we had to, let's just say, level a building then that was a decision that came to me. Because at the end it goes back to the rules of engagement that I won't say restricted us. That's really not a fair characterization. The rules of engagement that caused us to not needlessly destroy infrastructure inside Sirte.

Now when it was all over, Sirte's got a lot of issues. There's a lot of destruction that's there. But that just happens when you're in an urban environment. And the GNA militia forces who are on the ground, you know, they had airstrikes too. They had tanks and so forth. Their rules of engagement, if you will, are probably a little bit different than ours.

But, a long way of getting to the question of what decisions did I make? On a handful of occasions I made decisions that specifically dealt with destruction of infrastructure based on the threat that was, and the enemy that were in that building after they couldn't be neutralized by other means.

**DWG:** A separate question. The French have an operation, Operation Barkhane based out of Chad. I was wondering if you could talk a little bit about that relationship that you have with the French, supporting them, and do you see that relationship evolving in the coming year or so?

**General Waldhauser:** The French do have an operation over in western, the western continent -- Niger, Mali and the like -- Operation Barkhane. They've been there now for several years. We have provided for some time now support to them in terms of air refueling, aerial transportation. We on occasion exchange intelligence. And we have a very good relationship with the French in that area. And they're primarily focused on the AQIM threat there and we do what we can, when asked, to work with them, to help

support them, because that's an area that we would like to see them continue in. It's one less area for us that we have to be specifically or significantly involved in.

We've developed a partnership with the French and have a good relationship with them and support them in the manner that I just described.

**DWG:** Do you see that growing? Going in any other direction beyond where it is now?

**General Waldhauser:** Well, I mean there's always room to improve. There's always a possibility for it to evolve. I think from the AFRICOM perspective, we want to work with the French to ensure and to help them maintain their efforts there because it's a large continent, there's plenty of work to be done, and we want to make sure that we work with all of our partners, in this case the French, so that we have a comprehensive, let's just say plan that takes on all the [EVEO] organizations across the continent.

There is a possibility it could evolve. We make small tweaks on this all the time in terms of kind of what we provide to them, but in the main, I think it's important that we maintain a strong relationship with them, provide support in situations where they perhaps have some shortcomings because it's in both of our interests to do that.

**DWG:** General, the UN Security Council panel of experts released, on military sanctions, released its report earlier this month. One of the findings was that North Korea is engaging in illegal arms trade with a number of African nations including DRC, Angola, Mozambique, Libya.

Can you talk a little bit about what role enforcement of North Korea UN North Korean sanctions play in AFRICOM communications with African partners?

**General Waldhauser:** That's kind of an interesting question, and the best way I can answer it is this, and it probably revolves around the point of weapon sales. The combatant commanders, and obviously in my case AFRICOM, you know, we are not directly involved in the weapon sales. That comes out of the Department of Security Cooperation and assistance in the Office of the Secretary of Defense. Where we get involved is, we get asked is this, if a particular country wants to purchase weapon systems, whether that may be rifles, aircraft, tanks, vehicles, we're asked do you think they need that capability? Do they need that capacity?

So we give an assessment from a military perspective in terms of whether we think that would be something that would be beneficial to them, and how it would you know, collide with or support our strategic objectives. So we offer that opinion. But I think, you know, it's pretty common knowledge that our, when the U.S. sells weapon systems there are some issues there that have to do with human rights and do on, and sometimes countries like North Korea, Russia, China, don't really have those strings attached, if you will, and so sometimes if the United States either will not or perhaps maybe there's financial reasons more so than other issues why weapon systems would not be sold, then these countries, you know, have markets with the North Koreans, the Russians, the Chinese, because they essentially will sell these weapons without strings attached.

So I would just say that, you know, sanctions with different countries. Libya has sanctions on it for example at the moment. But if you just go back to weapon sales, that's something that the combatant commanders don't necessarily control, don't necessarily oversee, but we're asked our opinions for the most part on the capacity or capability it gives to that country and how that would affect either working with us or perhaps even against us.

**DWG:** On a related matter, there is legislation moving through the House right now that would mandate the cutting off of most kinds of U.S. foreign assistance including, I believe, security aid to countries that violate North Korea arms sanctions imposed by the Security Council. Considering the amount of security cooperation we do throughout Africa, what would it mean for your role if this bill becomes law and we have to cut arms security cooperation off? How would that affect your work and other U.S. broader, long-term regional, strategical?

**General Waldhauser:** This came out in testimony very clearly. It's interesting, during testimony here a couple of weeks ago on one hand Senator Graham and his support for aid and development aid and that type of thing, and now on the other hand you have Senator Warren, both really making the case of why this type of contribution is important to the development side, especially in places like Africa.

You know, we work very closely with the various agencies -- USAID, State Department, non-governmental organizations, because their ability to help provide capacity building for these countries is very very important. If you have security, you need to have development, and you need to have sustainable development or otherwise we're going to really run into problems in this country, in Africa.

It all goes back to the whole idea of, again, of providing a livelihood or jobs, education and so forth, for a population in many cases where it's very very poor.

We talked about the migration issue and how, you know, one of the things that we've been looking at in AFRICOM is the business side of phenomena like migration. I use the example of the country Niger. They make about \$400 a year is their GDP for their average citizen. But the money that is being made off the migration business is very very much an increase from that.

So in sum, the requirement for aid for development is very very important, especially in places like Africa. So it's something that we as military members really understand. We see the benefit of it. And you know, if you take, let's go back to Sirte for a minute. We, USAID, for example, is working with local Sirte members to write a constitution, to write laws for their particular city. They're working with infrastructure to bring water back inside there. They're working with education. So this is something that you don't really see a lot of you, you don't hear a lot of, but it's the development side that complements what we do militarily in order to get to a political solution.

So the requirement for developmental dollars, especially on the continent, is very very significant, and we would be, we'll fall behind if we miss out on that.

**DWG:** We have a base in Djibouti from which a lot of our most sensitive operations begin and end. The Chinese have a facility now in Djibouti. I'm wondering, do you characterize this as a military base? Or is this simply a trans-shipping function? And do you have a security concern about the closeness of the Chinese base?

**General Waldhauser:** The Chinese base in Djibouti, by all accounts, will probably be finished sometime this summer. It's very very close. Several miles from our base at Camp Lemonnier. And I would character it as a military base.

It's designed to be a port for their ships that are transiting that part of the globe, those that are involved in the anti-piracy operations. China has several thousand peacekeepers on the continent. And so you'd have to characterize it as a military base.

That said, it's a first for them. They've never had an overseas base, and we've never had a base of let's just say a peer competitor a close as this one happens to be. So there's a lot of learning going on, a lot of growing going on.

Yes, there are some very significant operational concerns. Operational security concerns. And I think that, our base there is significant to us because it's not only AFRICOM that utilizes the strategic geography of Djibouti, but it's CENTCOM, Special Operations Command, EUCOM. That is a significantly important base vis-à-vis its geography.

So yes, there are concerns and we're aware of those, and we've spoken to the Djiboutian government about it. They know what are concerns are. But again, it's something that we're going to have to watch because it's a first for us and a first for the Chinese.

**DWG:** I was talking with a guy with a lot of cyber stuff at one of the labs, and he said that given the enormous size of [inaudible], from what he's saying, there were concerns about how well you were able to secure whatever cyber assets you were able to maintain.

I was wondering how you address this. Have you got some of the internet cables that go in your AOR --

**General Waldhauser:** Look, if the question has to do with cyber and AFRICOM, you know, I think that one of the things that we've tried to do since I've been in the command is really start to establish and develop what we want to do offensively, defensively, cyber wise, with inside Africa Command. At the moment we've used really the internet to a large degree to try to influence operations, for example, in Sirte. ISIS is very good at their use of the web and social media and so forth, and to a large degree our effort has been trying to knock down or at least get out ahead of some of the messaging. And that's the case, you know, all over the continent.

So we're trying to establish ourselves there and kind of where we want to go.

But I would say for the most part, technology wise and cyber wise on the continent, that's, it's there, it's a concern of ours. We need to do more and get better at it. But a lot of the problems that we have on the continent don't necessarily revolve around cyber. I think there's a lot of cultural issues. There's just a lot of survival issues. There's a lot of you know, transregional trafficking weapons, drugs, people, migrants and the like. And so I would not, that's not to take lightly a cyber threat. Cyber operation on the continent. But I think for Africa at the moment, you know, we're trying to grow and we're trying to sort our way through that. But our cyber challenges at the moment perhaps aren't as great as they are in other theaters. I'd characterize it that way.

**DWG:** General, can you talk a little bit about the enduring threat of al-Qaida, both in your AO and elsewhere? And can you talk a little bit about how they've effectively adapted the sort of franchise model, how [central al-Qaida is doing in your mind. Just a little bit about that.

**General Waldhauser:** That's an interesting question because I think it's interesting that my comments are from the African context, from the African lens context.

It's a little bit of a different kind of point of view.

I think that one of the things that's important to understand is that when we view threats, whether it's ISIS or AQIM, and then I think from the global perspective inside Washington here, it's a look at those threats, and first of all, their ability, are they a country threat? Are they a regional threat? What is the likelihood of that particular threat taking on Western interests in that region on the continent? What is the likelihood of that threat moving across the Mediterranean into Europe? And what is the likelihood of that threat making its way into the United States?

So if you have AQIM, I think sometimes when you think of it in African terms, you have to look at, first of all I think some of the drivers that bring these young men, the large population of young men, that bring these individuals into these organizations. And it's very complex and I think we all understand that. There's no one set, cookie-cutter approach of this is why somebody becomes radicalized. But I can say I think on the continent, though, drivers of young men joining these organizations aren't necessarily always ideology. It's about livelihood. It's about jobs. And we know this from various examples. Boko Haram, for example, here recently, 26 of these guys gave themselves up, came out of the forest. And 25 of them said, when they asked them why they joined, it's because we needed to have food and food for our families. So ideology is not necessarily a driver here.

AQIM, for the most part, continues to be, I would say more regionally, a regional player. So if you take a look at Mali today, there were four groups -- Ansar al Dine, AQIM, and so forth. They've now morphed into one group called The True Believers of Islam, and I don't have the title right, but it translates into four groups combining into one to The True Believers of Islam and the Crusaders or something like that. We can get you the exact name, if you need it.

So what's the impact of that? The impact of that at the moment is probably not much. You have four separate AQ-affiliated type groups who continue to kidnap for ransom, be an obstacle to the peace process in Mali, continue to conduct raids and perhaps even killings in villages and so forth. But they're not, and they have operated outside the area there in Mali. I mean the Hotel Radisson, the Hotel Blu in Cote d'Ivoire, and on the beach and so forth there. They've done things outside the region, but in the last 18 months or so they've just kind of had a tendency to stay engaged in their own area.

So they like to affiliate and put a label that we belong to AQIM, or we're a part of ISIS. But on the African continent, many times these are groups of bandits and groups of just individuals who just have been around for a long while, and their goal may be some type of caliphate. Their goal may have an ideological twist to it, but at the moment, not a lot of capacity or capability to operate outside the regions that they have.

Now, could they strike with four or five guys at a hotel somewhere, a Western hotel somewhere on the continent today? Sure. I mean that's always possible. But I would say that the AQIM groups that we watch, whether it's Al-Shabaab affiliated kind of in the east, or the groups I just talked about in the west around Mali and so forth, kidnappings, you know, some murders and so forth. But for the most part, not demonstrating a capacity to work outside their region.

**DWG:** With these groups, whether it's AQ or ISIS, the young men who are joining these groups, is it for lack of a better term, a [via] opportunity, like whichever ISIS or AQ they'd rather have? OR are you seeing AQ or ISIS having, selling a better brand, so to speak, and has the stock [inaudible] investing either in AQ or ISIS going up or down right now?

**General Waldhauser:** I think to a large degree it's who's giving the better offer. I mean we've seen reports inside Somalia, for example, where there's a small ISIS group inside Somalia. They have competition with Al-Shabaab. Al-Shabaab is AQIM affiliated, if you will. But who's paying more this month?

The drought, the famine inside Somalia is having a significant impact across the board and it certainly has the ability for, to negate al-Shabaab's ability to raise money or raise funds. You can't tax them because people don't have money, the people aren't there and so on.

So there's competition between these groups, and I'd say maybe once in a while who's paying the most, who's paying more has the ability to influence who's recruiting more.

**DWG:** Paul, then Otto.

**DWG:** You have what appears to be unique experience having witnessed the peak of ISIS in an urban area without a [inaudible] fall back into. I'd be interested now that it's been a few weeks since Sirte has been liberated, I'd be interested to get your sense of what you've learned about the way that ISIS operates when that kind of thing happens. What has been done since and what does it seem to be planning to do next?

**General Waldhauser:** I think to answer that I'd probably have to go back to where we were last summer, May, June, July time frame. I think when the reports were that ISIS was no longer having their people come to Iraq and Syria, they were actually sending them to Libya. I think it was widely reported that ISIS had said hey look, Sirte and Libya's our fall-back position. If things go bad we're going to continue to operate and we'll move there. For a host of reasons. On the coast. They'd have some strategic geography. There's oil in Libya. And perhaps most importantly, you have a weak or non-stable government which is an environment where these groups thrive.

So I think last summer, last spring, last summer, the goal or the perhaps way forward in Sirte for ISIS obviously was different than it is today. So one of the reasons I think why we finally made a decision to go ahead and help the GNA, not only because they asked, but is to take away at that time that piece of the so-called caliphate that was going to be their backup plan. To take that real estate or territory away from them. Because at the time I think ISIS writ large was making a big deal about the territory that they owned and the swath that would come across Syria, Iraq and so forth, was somewhat daunting, I suppose.

And now they no longer have that. So the key was, why is it important for us to take Sirte, is to make sure that there is no fallback position and to deny territory to this particular organization.

It took a little longer to do that, I think, than people may have thought. But the fact of the matter was, they had several years in there to prepare the defenses. Several years to create all kinds of havoc with the infrastructure in terms of IEDs and fighting positions and the like. And again, when you're concerned about destruction of infrastructure, when you're concerned about civilian casualties, it will take time to go eventually house to house, room to room and house to house to clear the ISIS fighters who are left. Because at the end of the day, when it got down to a very small, soda straw view, if you will, of what was left in Sirte, the people there, the ISIS fighters there knew they were going to die. But they were going to create as much hate and discontent as they could before that happened.

So they left, the hard core who stayed, obviously, were all killed and Sirte became liberated, if you will, of ISIS. We watched them move, though, to other locations on the ground in southern Libya, and we took, we struck again on January 18<sup>th</sup>.

So about a month or so after Sirte was declared free of ISIS, a second strike occurred in southern Libya. That's because we had, with the ISR assets that we had, it took us a while to develop that intelligence so that we had the level of certainty that we needed to say we want to strike these targets. And so they moved out to the desert. They moved in locations that were away from urban environments to try to, you know, disperse and so on and so forth. And we, you know, we did strike again on the 18<sup>th</sup> of January.

So what we see now though is that they're still there. ISIS is still in Libya. And interestingly, in Libya if you, nobody agrees on anything but one thing they do agree on

is that they do not want ISIS there. And that's been an interesting dynamic, that whether it's the GNA in Sarraj or the LNA in Haftar, working with both of those groups and individuals, the common goal to rid ISIS is one thing that they all agree upon.

So what we're seeing today is, you know, they try to work their tactics and procedures by adjusting to try to stay off the net, to try to stay on the run, maintain a focus there, perhaps have the ability to do some type of limited strike. But they still remain and until there's a government in Libya that will be able to run the country, wield power there, they'll probably still remain there.

I don't know if that gets exactly to your question or not, but --

**DWG:** In clearing this specific area of ISIS or during any time that happened, what is the importance of having a follow-on development plan, follow-on political plan to, once the military tactical success has been achieved, to be able to then maintain it? And if you have a sense of how that process is going now.

**General Waldhauser:** In Sirte. Obviously you know, you want to have a plan that you maintain security inside that city. I think, what was the number, 80,000 or whatever it was in Sirte, the population there. They were clamoring to get back in as soon as it was declared liberated. But there's a whole significant process that has to take place, that is taking place. First of all, essentially to demine the city because, as I mentioned, ISIS had been there for quite some time, and the booby traps and the IEDs are things that just had to be dealt with. And at the end of the day I think the Red Cross was pulling out several hundred bodies that had been in there. I mean it was really just simply a mess because the carnage at the end I think became quite obvious when you're in that type of urban environment.

Now unfortunately, so you have the GNA who's trying to get up to speed. You have local Sirte officials who are trying to get up to speed. But you need a significant amount of international help demining, infrastructure repair, you know, bringing everybody back together so the city is safe to life in. It's [inaudible] having to do that even under the best of circumstances with a government that's in control.

So I think the best way to characterize it, I was in Tunis here maybe a month or so ago no. It's methodically working its way back. It's not fast enough by any means. USAID, as I mentioned, is working with some water infrastructure projects, there's international community demining, there are people that are trying to get the schools back up. Actually, I saw something this morning, I didn't get a chance to read it in detail, though, that the GNA has established I think a 3,000 man force to take over security inside Sirte. Because they had left a militia battalion in there to maintain security, and now they're going to turn it over to an actual GNA force to maintain security.

It's a huge effort. Look, even with our painstaking efforts to be as precise as we could with our strikes in there, I mean the city of Sirte is devastated. I mean you really have to almost start all over. That's a huge project.

So you need international support. You need all kinds of monetary support. And it's not easy to do.

So I don't know exactly today, I can find out if you'd like. But I know that what was starting to happen is that the population of Sirte was trying to kind of come back from the outward in and trying to retake their, you know, where they lived and so forth, from outward in. But I don't really have a good assessment today. I haven't asked that question for a while. I just do know it's very difficult.

**DWG:** General, you said Friday that you had for the most part the resources you need for your command. But for the operation against Sirte you had the advantage of having a MEU ARG that happened to be passing through, which doesn't happen very often. And you have to share the special purpose MAGTAF, the crisis response, with EUCOM. They helped in Africa before you got there, and you've talked about the need for additional ISR.

Would it help you to have your own crisis response MAGTAF? Or to have a MEU ARG more regularly in the Med?

**General Waldhauser:** I can just answer that by saying yes, and just stop. [Laughter].

Look, and I think I've said this before. As the AFRICOM combatant commander it's my job to advocate for the needs of the African AOR, and I'll continue to do that. But I think as we grow into this concept of transregional approach and transregional problems, I think it's incumbent on the combatant commanders to advocate for their own AOR, but at the same time have a little bit of a bigger window of the world and have an understanding of what is going on in other places and how that fits into our overall strategy, into our overall prioritization of assets. That's not to say that we shouldn't ask hard questions, and that's not to say that I would ask for something even though I thought perhaps the chance of getting it is you know, is not very good. I think it just means that we as combatant commanders need to be able to really make the case for why we need something when we ask for it, and how that contributes to our national security strategy, and how that contributes to whatever the priority of the day means. In other words, we really have to make the case, as opposed to just saying this is what I want, and this is what I need.

So sure, we would like to have more assets. And you know, sometimes by chance it works out in your favor. And by the fact of the ARG MEU transiting the Med at that point in time, and we took the big deck and utilized the, you know, the Harriers and the Cobra helicopters that were on-board that ship. Sometimes that works in your favor, and it did in this particular case. But obviously CENTCOM missed that particular asset for quite some time. But at the same time, if from a global perspective that was making a huge contribution to, you know, the counter-ISIS fight.

So in sum, I think that combatant commanders need to be able to make the case and make strong cases, understand how that fits into the whole global perspective if we're

going to truly take on this fight in a transregional sense. Because it needs to be more than just a bumper sticker.

**DWG:** Lolita.

**DWG:** General, back to Somalia for a minute. You talked about how you got the resources you need, but as the Amazon nations start to pull out, do you see a need for additional trainers to help build capacity for the Somali forces? You said that they're lagging behind. What is your assessment of what you think the U.S. may need to do there? Can that be helped by your additional authority?

**General Waldhauser:** First I just want to underscore the point that we are not the only ones there who are doing the training and are doing the CT fight. So Turkey, for example, is about to complete a very, I think their largest outside the country training compound in Mogadishu here very very soon. This will have the capacity to provide for approximately 500 or so trained Somali National Security Forces I want to say on an annual basis. So my point is that we're not the only ones there.

Time is a huge issue here, and over the last ten years there has been a lot of effort, both fiscal, monetary effort and training effort into trying to build a Somali National Army. We've not done very well.

So at this point in time, we need to make sure that we have a standard for all the various countries who are there training to meet. We need to make sure we tack and move those units around. Because at the end of the day the plan is for about, if we stick on course right now, we're going to have somewhere around 5,000 to 6000 Somali National Security Forces trained by about 2020, and if we combine them in a smart way, if the Somalis combine them in a smart way with their militias and clans and work it in that direction, we have a chance to be where we need to be when the AMISOM pull out, finally pull out about 2020. We need to stick out the training part of this because it's very very, it's a very huge part of where this country, where Somalia needs to be by 2020. I don't know if that helps you or not.

**DWG:** Thank you for being here. I was wondering what role is AFRICOM playing in the new administration? Do you see it expanding? Do you see it shrinking? Where do you see it over the next year [inaudible]?

**General Waldhauser:** I get that question a lot, what's the impact of the new administration. And the truth is, at the moment, at the moment we continue to do, we're continuing to be on track with where we have been in terms of our theater campaign plan, in terms of our strategic objectives, in terms of our piece against the counter-ISIS fight. We're continuing down that path.

We work with Secretary Mattis in terms of where he wants to go in terms of some strategies and so forth, and he's working on that. We anticipate some type of new counter-ISIS strategy to come out. But for the most part, I think our focus in AFRICOM, which is the capacity building, doing a lot with little, the counter-VEO fight. We're

pretty much on track with where, you know, we'll stick with that until someone tells us different. We don't see a major shift, whether it be philosophically, or a major shift really asset wise. I mean we historically are, we do a lot with a little. And as I tell our people, don't expect we're getting any more, so we need to keep that mindset and keep focused on where we want to go and not get overly concerned about what may or may not happen with the new administration.

**DWG:** [Inaudible].

**General Waldhauser:** I think it just underscores the strategic importance of that whole area of the Bab-el-Mandeb Straits, the whole issue of what goes on there close to the Red Sea. I mean it's a very, you know, the region is very very diverse. The geography there is strategic. I can't really speak for why the UAE wants to do that. I mean I think you can make your own assumptions as to why they would need a base there. But I would just say that it just underscores the importance of that particular, it underscores the importance of the geography of that area of the continent. And where it's so close to the CENTCOM region, the straits there narrow down; the Red Sea; all that goes with that. Yemen is right there. And the potential for a large flow of ISIS to come across into northern Somalia. I mean there's a lot going on in that particular part of the world, and obviously it's been under-developed, and I think as we move forward, I think you have the U.S. there in Djibouti, the Chinese in Djibouti, the UAE there, the Russians trying to get into Djibouti through the Chinese. So there's a lot going on there.

**DWG:** [Inaudible].

**General Waldhauser:** Yes. I mean it is. There's some internal politics in Somali land, in Somalia and that type of thing. That's not for me to kind of get engaged with, but a UAE base there will provide them flexibility to what they're doing in that part of the world.

**DWG:** We'll finish up with Mark and then Richard, and then unfortunately we'll have to do a hard break at that point and let the General get on with the rest of his day.

**DWG:** General, you mentioned ISIS and their [inaudible] presence. Recently ISIS in Iraq has touted their ability to use small, commercially available drones to bomb Iraqi forces in Mosul and killed quite a few soldiers. I was wondering if you've seen that threat emerge in your area and if so, how you're trying to address that.

**General Waldhauser:** I would have to say that I have not seen that yet emerge in our area. Sirte was a little bit different. I think that the GNA forces did utilize some of their own drones. I believe that the ISIS fighters there did have small use of drones. But nothing on a significant impact yet. Now that's not to say it's not going to happen. I mean we don't see that with al-Shabaab, for example. We don't see that with Boko Haram, for example. But that's not to say that in the future that that level of technology would not catch up with those particular groups. And I think that, that I think again goes back to the unique lens of Africa when it comes to these type of violent extremist organizations, when you say ISIS or al-Shabaab, Boko Haram, AQIM, and their

capabilities and capacity on the continent sometimes it's a little bit different than what you find in the Middle East.

**DWG:** There were reports yesterday that there was some kind of a [inaudible] inside Somalia. [Inaudible] helicopters [inaudible]?

**General Waldhauser:** Well, I don't really know if they were U.S. helicopters. I mean obviously there's a lot going on on the border with Kenya and they contribute to the AMISOM forces. Al-Shabaab has historically and as recently as January now, I think off the top of my head, is the last time they tried to overrun some of the Kenyan FOBs there. But obviously, Kenya on the border with Somalia, with significant al-Shabaab activity in that region, it's no surprise that the Kenyans sometimes on their own take on al-Shabaab because al-Shabaab certainly has taken on Kenyan FOBs right there on that border in southern Somalia.

**DWG:** We would keep you here all day if we could, but you've got other responsibilities. So thank you so much for coming in.

**General Waldhauser:** Can I just, I've done this on Friday and doing it today, and I appreciate you all taking the time to kind of listen to the AFRICOM story. We're stationed in Stuttgart, not here all the time. And there's a lot going on in the continent. It's obviously not the main effort and that's fine, but I appreciate you taking the time to listen and appreciate the time we've had with you Friday and today. So thank you all very much.

**DWG:** Thank you, sir.

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