Statement of John F. Tierney
Chairman
Subcommittee on National Security and Foreign Affairs

Hearing on "AFRICOM: Rationales, Roles, and Progress on the Eve of Operations"

As Prepared for Delivery

July 15, 2008

Good morning. Today the Subcommittee is holding its first oversight on the formation of the U.S. military's new combatant command, AFRICOM.

While this hearing is the Subcommittee's first public discussion on this important topic, it represents the culmination of a year-long, bipartisan focus that began when we requested that the Government Accountability Office analyze the stand-up of AFRICOM. I would like to thank Ranking Member Shays and his staff for their efforts.

In the first instance, AFRICOM will oversee U.S. military relationships, activities, and interests throughout Africa, with sole exception of Egypt, which will remain under the auspices of the U.S. Central Command, or CENTCOM. AFRICOM's geographic jurisdiction has been carved from CENTCOM (which focused on the Horn of Africa and other eastern regions of the continent), the U.S. Pacific Command (which focused on Madagascar), and the U.S. European Command, EUCOM (which focused on the rest of western and southern Africa).

Congressional oversight issues are always present in connection with significant government initiatives such as the establishment of a combatant command. There will always be questions of the strategic rationale, coherence of mission, and continuity of operations. There will always be questions of right-sizing the necessary infrastructure. There will always be questions of personnel and stewardship of taxpayer funds. And these questions figure prominently in the current discussion of AFRICOM's establishment.

However, AFRICOM presents additional unique questions during a perilous post-Cold War, post-9/11 environment in which we continue to grapple with the "asymmetric" threats of terrorists, guerrillas, and insurgents, while we are ever mindful of a re-emergent Russian and emerging superpower in China.

Last November, Defense Secretary Robert Gates delivered a remarkable lecture in which he recognized that, and I quote, "*these new threats…require our government to operate as a whole differently – to act with unity, agility, and creativity. And they will*

require considerably more resources devoted to America's non-military instruments of power."

Early Administration rhetoric about the Africa Command envisioned AFRICOM as a transformational experiment of a whole-of-government, interagency approach to U.S. national security strategy. As a practical matter, AFRICOM has departed from traditional combatant command leadership structures by adding a civilian foreign service officer as one of its two deputy commanders.

However – and this is something we will explore in today's hearing – it appears that ambitions for AFRICOM have been scaled back in light of interagency concerns about a military lead in areas of traditional diplomacy and international development, African governments' concerns about a prominent U.S. military presence on the continent, and humanitarian and development organizations' concerns about the potential militarization of foreign aid and humanitarian assistance.

So, with that backdrop in mind, AFRICOM presents a number of important questions, some of which are AFRICOM-specific and some of which point to broader, fundamental questions of how the United States should organize itself to achieve its foreign policy and national security interests.

In the spirit of constructive oversight, I offer a few questions that will be on my mind as we begin to hear from this panel of dedicated public servants from both the Executive and Legislative branches of our government:

- What is the strategic vision driving the creation of AFRICOM? How has that vision evolved over time?

- How will the interagency work within AFRICOM, and vis-à-vis the State Department, USAID, and the various Embassy Country teams throughout Africa?

- What steps are being taken to ensure continuity in ongoing operations, initiatives, and relationships that are being transferred from EUCOM, CENTCOM, and PACOM to AFRICOM?

- What is the status of AFRICOM in terms of staffing, costs, and infrastructure? Where will it be at "FOC"? Where will it be at its end point?

- What are AFRICOM's future plans for the U.S. military footprint in Africa?

- How is AFRICOM going to interact with non-governmental organizations that are involved in humanitarian and development work on the continent?

- How will AFRICOM interact with African nations themselves?

And, one final question that really goes to my colleagues as much as our panel:

- To the extent that AFRICOM is not going to, or should not, represent a "whole of government" approach to national security strategy, what is the right platform and government structure required to achieve that " unity, agility, and creativity" presciently called for by Secretary Gates.

I look forward to our discussion.