

AFRICOM, victim of internal rivalries

In a recent article published in the Wall Street Journal, the former secretary of state in charge of African affairs in the Bush Administration, the Republican Jendayi Frazer, advocates the transfer of AFRICOM, the U.S. command for the African continent, from Stuttgart to Monrovia. Liberia, located on the oil-rich Gulf of Guinea, has offered to host the U.S. office, while most African countries quietly refused. However, a recent report issued by the inspector general of the U.S. State Department is severe vis-à-vis the management of the African Affairs Bureau since 2005. Indeed Frazer is said to hold an important share of responsibility for this lack of "African location" for AFRICOM, almost two years after the creation of the new command. Among the criticisms of the work carried out by Jendayi Frazer and some members of her team: the very poor cooperation between the Bureau and AFRICOM, a new illustration of the traditional rivalry between the State Department and the Department of Defence. Some diplomats, unprepared by their superiors, have seen some AFRICOM officials in their embassies, who they have quickly seen as rivals in the local management of U.S. interests. For their part, representatives of the new military command reportedly sometimes conduct themselves as if they were in charge, not recognising the authority of the local representative of the U.S. Government, the ambassador... Unfortunately, AFRICOM strongly needed the diplomats in order to convince African authorities to give the new U.S. command a better home. The report notes that the rivalry between the military and diplomats is also true on the ground, mainly provoked by the disparity of financial resources available respectively from AFRICOM and diplomats. For instance, in Somalia in 2008 AFRICOM had a public relations budget 20 times higher than that of the embassy. Due to the lack of resources and occasionally lack of competencies, the Bureau of African Affairs was also unable to manage the existing programmes on the ground, such as ACOTA (Africa Contingency Operations Training and Assistance), which trains many African officers in crisis management, not to mention new programmes (Millennium Challenge Accounts...).

(cont'd page 2)

Russia: Interest in amphibious assault ship

During the conference held in Yaroslavl (Russia) on 14 September, which happens to be President Medvedev's birthday, French Prime Minister François Fillon minister raised the question of the sale of the Bâtiment de Projection et de Commandement, in addition to other international issues. The BPC measures 199 meters long and has a displacement of 21,500 tonnes. With a large hospital infrastructure and command, it can embark 16 heavy helicopters, 70 vehicles, four landing craft and 450 troops. However, at the French Presidency, doubt prevails. Indeed, Russian authorities, except

for Chief of General Staff General Nikolai Makarov, author of an enthusiastic statement, remain vague about their true intentions. Thus, as reported by the Kommersant, the Kremlin is also looking at the Dutch proposal, which proposes a very similar ship, the Johan de Witt-class, which was presented during the Saint Petersburg exhibition. Furthermore, the Spanish shipbuilder Navantia has also entered the competition for the project. The French industry DCNS is remaining silent over Russia, while maintaining its desire to become "Europe's leading exporter of armed vessels." ■

France: Thales' UAV strategy

Thales has remained rather quiet lately in terms of French army UAV programmes. However the French company has not abandoned the idea of proposing its Watchkeeper UAV system to the French forces. Developed with the Israeli company Elbit and produced by UAV Tactical Systems, a joint venture between Thales UK and Elbit, Watchkeeper is currently operated by the British Ministry of Defence. With only two tactical UAV systems (Sagem SDTI), the French army stated its requirement for a third system. Thales' strategy could be to offer a Watchkeeper type "2,3,4": two operations carried out at the same time, three tactical UAVs and four integrating use of batteries. According to some officials, Watchkeeper is moving more into the small MALE (Medium Altitude Long Endurance) category than that of tactical UAVs. The Thales solution could hence cover a wider scope of missions from tactical to operational level. But who will control the system, the army or the air force? The risk of an internal battle cannot be avoided. In order to overcome this risk, Thales could propose, as it did with the U.K., a fully outsourced service offering mutualised between the army and air force. Thales has not abandoned the goal of becoming a UAV platform-maker. The current year is likely to be an important one in terms of UAV decisions. Regarding the French army, for the sake of simplicity, until 2016 the third possible system should be an SDTI (Thales choice would require additional training costs). However, after 2016, a different solution could be selected. ■

AFRICOM (cont'd from page 1)

Among its recommendations, the General Inspectorate calls for a complete restructuring of the "security" division of the Bureau of African Affairs (Office of Regional Security Affairs), but also suggests the transfer of ACOTA management to AFRICOM. American diplomats will probably complain about the "militarisation of diplomacy," however, according to the report, this is due to the negligence of their superiors. In these circumstances, doubts may arise about the effectiveness of expert action on the part of AFRICOM in the Democratic Republic of Congo for the protection of the U.S. mining programme or even for any real support in stabilising the eastern part of the country.

President Sarkozy in Saudi Arabia

President Nicolas Sarkozy's visit to Saudi Arabia will now be held in late November or early December. It has been postponed for several weeks because of the presumed absence of King Abdullah in early November. Besides signing a bilateral agreement on civilian nuclear energy, the visit should be an opportunity to finalise the sale of high-speed TGV (Alstom) railways to the Kingdom. Military projects should be widely discussed. According to TTU sources, the Saudi navy is primarily concerned. Riyadh has expressed interest in multi-mission Fremm frigates (DCNS); the Saudis want to expand their navy's areas of action. Another issue would be also reportedly well advanced: the proposed purchase by Riyadh of Casa C-295 maritime patrol aircraft equipped with FITS (Fully Integrated Tactical System), developed by EADS.

Israel: Iron dome questioned

"Iron Dome," a system currently being developed in Israel, aims to destroy any rockets launched against southern Israel by Palestinians from the Gaza Strip controlled by Hamas

Iran: Talks to open

During his campaign, Barack Obama promised to open talks with Iran, without preconditions. Despite the unattractiveness of the Iranian offer for comprehensive negotiations that was recently introduced to the U.S., Obama has made good on his promise and has led France and the U.K., initially reticent, as well as others, such as Germany, Russia and China, towards a positive response to Iranian President Ahmadinejad. For now, the only goal is to open talks and see. Ahmadinejad has pointed out that he is willing to talk about everything but the Iranian nuclear programme, which is not negotiable. However, this is the only topic that really interests the other countries. But there is hope that once around a table, some obstacles might be lifted. Moreover, there has been at least one secret correspondence between Iran and the U.S. recently in which some openings were undoubtedly made. Negotiations will now at least take place within each camp—between those who want to demonstrate that it is definitely impossible to negotiate seriously with Iran, and others who are betting on the dynamics of negotiation to find an outcome to the current impasse. But in the end, everyone knows that there is only one agreement possible: Westerners will have to accept Iran's nuclear programme in its general form, and Iran will have to accept that its programme will have to be monitored and supervised by the International Atomic Energy Agency to reassure the outside world and to prevent any military use of the nuclear programme going undetected. Although the threat of Iran acquiring a bomb would not be eliminated, the possibility would however be controlled. After all, since the 1990s, the Americans have been announcing almost every year that the Islamic regime will have the bomb within five years. In 2006, Mossad chief Meir Dagan predicted that Iran would have a nuclear bomb "in three or four years." In 2008, he switched to the new figure of three years. Last June, he said the deadline was more likely 2014. Indefinitely maintaining this gap of four to five years appears to ensure the essential, i.e. the necessary time to discourage Iran from achieving such a goal.

Islamists. It is the subject of great controversy. A group of experts and reservist officers have sent a joint letter to Ehud Barak, the minister of defence, in which they criticise the decision to deploy this type of system around the Gaza Strip by mid-2010. According to them, "Iron Dome," developed by Rafael, a state-owned weapons company, will not be fast enough to intercept Qassam rockets, which have a range of 16 to 18 km and a flight time that does not exceed 30 seconds. Moreover, these rockets fly at a low altitude, from 100 to 300 metres, so the preferred target, such as the Israeli town of Sderot, for instance, could suffer damage as a result of fallout from rockets destroyed in flight. According to experts, the system does not provide credible protection within a range of less than 16 km so that Sderot, Ashkelon, and Netivot will be defenceless like other towns in the northern

part of the country near the Lebanese border. For example, Nahariya, Maalot, Safed and Kiryat Shmona could also be attacked by Hezbollah rockets. Alternatively, signatories of the letter recommend the adoption of the American system Skyguard, which uses lasers and could be deployed on the ground within a year-and-a-half. The limited range of the rockets is not a handicap for the Skyguard system, which can also destroy its targets six seconds after the launch of the rocket and three seconds after being detected. The American equipment would also intercept mortar shells used by Palestinian fighters. In response to this letter, the MoD has been vocal in defending the Israeli option "Iron Dome." "The tests that we conducted gave full satisfaction and the system recently intercepted two rockets in flight during testing," said an officer working closely with Ehud Barak.

ISRAEL: NO MORE THIRSTY SOLDIERS

Israeli soldiers in operation should no longer suffer from thirst. The unit within the Israeli military staff made up only of reservists and notably responsible for water supply in enemy territory aims to provide 11 litres of water per day for each soldier engaged in operation. With the help of chemists, nutritional experts and materials developed in the United States, the water is transported in portable containers that will also serve as disinfectors. "The quality of equipment we

have developed allows us to handle any type of water and carry out chemical analysis. We are ready to face any situation, including targeted attacks from the enemy against the water supply of our soldiers," an officer said. He said that the equipment available for the Israeli army can process 250,000 to 300,000 litres of water per day. "The decision has been made to double this capacity in order to ensure a vital need in case of a major conflict," the officer said.

ISRAEL: LARGE-SCALE ANTI-MISSILE EXERCISE

In mid-October, the Israeli army will participate in an unprecedented large-scale exercise with the U.S. European Command (EUCOM) as well as with the U.S. agency in charge of missile defence. Four defence systems will be tested in parallel during this exercise: the Aegis, onboard a destroyer, the THAAD and the Patriot 3, i.e. the three most advanced U.S. defence systems as well as the latest version of the Arrow system, an anti-missile missile developed by Israel with U.S. funding. During the exercise, military forces will also test the "gift" offered by President

George Bush last October, an X-Band radar permanently deployed in the Negev desert, in the southern part of Israel, which can detect a missile fired at several thousand kilometres. Thanks to this, five to seven minutes are available to organise interception in flight in case a missile is fired from Iran. Hundreds of Israeli and U.S. soldiers, mostly air force, will participate in this exercise, which will last for several days. This year, emphasis will be placed on the complementarities of these systems.

POLAND: FORCES WITHDRAWAL

Following cuts to the defence budget, which reached 19.7 billion zlotys (4.27 billion euros) instead of 25 billion as initially planned, Warsaw authorities plan to withdraw from three United Nations missions at the end of 2009. These missions, which involve the Polish armed forces,

are Chad (400 soldiers), Lebanon (1,500 soldiers) and the Golan Heights (360 observers). However, Poland should increase its participation in ISAF, increasing the number of troops deployed in Afghanistan from 1,600 to 2,200, i.e. 600 additional soldiers.

QATAR: SAINT CYR PROJECT CHALLENGED

Everyone believed that the project to create a Saint-Cyr school (French senior officer school) in Qatar was just a matter of time. As discussed, the most elite French military school was to open in Doha to train students in the French language. However the complexity of the project, the economic crisis, tensions between the parties involved in the project, as well as competition from the Royal Academy of Sandhurst already in place have cancelled the project. Perhaps it was too

ambitious for Qatar? Perhaps the French did not sufficiently take into account Qatari specificities? According to TTU sources, the Arab military officers interested in the training did not want to go to Qatar for classes anyway and preferred to travel to France and have a better environment. In Doha, the fact that oil prices remain sluggish has led the emirate to reconsider its development ambitions, and the proposed Saint-Cyr school is among those that have been abandoned.

INDIA: A NEW MILITARY SHIPBUILDER

The privately owned Pipavav Shipyard Limited (PSL) is set to become the new giant naval shipbuilder in India. The company's CEO, Nikhil Gandhi, announced a few days ago that his company now has significant activity in the naval military sector and that his goal is to compete with Mazagon Shipyards, Goa Shipyards, Garden Reach and Cochin Shipyard Limited. Pipavav has thus entered the competition for the construction of seven ships (five offshore patrol vessels and two training boats) for the Indian navy. With these ships, which are relatively simple and feature few sophisticated weapons systems, PSL expects to gain the experience necessary for future construction of complex military ships. Based on the Gujarat coast (Arabian Sea), the shipyard's facilities are located near the seaport of Pipavav, the largest private seaport in the country, currently

managed by Maersk Group. The sites could accommodate repair and maintenance activities for ships weighing up to 400,000 tonnes, i.e. the essential vessels of the Indian navy and Indian Coast Guards fleets. Last July, PSL won a major tender with the national oil company ONGC to build 12 auxiliary ships for oil drilling. Previously, in February 2008, the French company SETAF Saget (Bourbon group) chose PSL for the construction of bulk carriers (Supramax and Panamax). With the decision to work in the military field following the Indian navy's recent invitation to tender, PSL becomes the second largest private Indian group, following Larsen & Toubro, to undertake construction of military ships. This new arrival confirms the gradual opening of the defence market in India to increasingly competitive private players.

U.S.: MORE POSEIDON FOR THE NAVY

The U.S. navy has decided to increase the number of Boeing P-8A Poseidon maritime patrol aircraft it is acquiring to replace its P-3s. The programme numbers will increase from 108 to 117 aircraft, with the additional cost estimated at 1.8 billion dollars. Currently, two Poseidons are engaged in a flight test campaign, while a third aircraft is planned to be operational by the end of the year. Two other cells were used for ground static testing that began last May. The U.S. navy and Boeing are studying the possibility of accelerating the production rate of the P-

8A, which currently provides the delivery of 13 aircraft per year from 2013. It is also expected that the delivery of the first improved version of this system, known as Increment I, will begin in 2013, to be followed two years later, in 2015, by the advanced Increment II version. Australia is planning to take part in the development programme for this second improved version, while India has already indicated that it has chosen the "custom" P-8I version (contract for eight units).

U.K.: CONTRACT AWARDED FOR FUTURE INTEGRATED SOLDIER TECHNOLOGY

As reported by Defence News & Analysis, TTU's partner in London, the defence equipment minister awarded a 150 million-pound contract to Thales UK for a Surveillance and Target Acquisition (STA) package, which forms the first increment of the FIST (Future Integrated Soldier Technology) programme. Nearly 11,000 items are being provided, including: thermal sights, close quarter battle sights, target locating systems, lightweight day sights, underslung grenade launcher sights, underslung grenade launcher fire control systems, ruggedised digital cameras and infantry periscopes. Deliveries of the new equipment are due to start at the end of 2010 and it

should be issued to troops for training in early 2011. Thales UK arranged an excellent demonstration to accompany the above announcement. As well as the minister, the colonel in charge of dismounted soldier solutions was available. Four Irish Guardsmen represented the commander, grenadier, gunner and marksman of a nominal infantry fire team. FIST STA was said to include: improved detection in difficult light; faster engagement of fleeting targets; improved target location; enhanced first round hit probability with grenade launcher; and increased ability to view from cover.

U.S.: NAVY ABANDONS THE HARPOON BLOCK III

The U.S. navy has decided to abandon the Harpoon Block III programme following the poor results obtained by the Rockwell Collins SCWDL system (Strike Common Weapon Data Link) during a recent test campaign. This modernised variant of the famous anti-ship missile made by Boeing is one of the first military projects

cancelled by the new secretary of defence, Robert Gates. Indeed, the development of SCWDL would need at least another year of development, thus delaying the programme. With the cancellation of the Block III, the U.S. navy loses coastal target precision attack capability, a new feature offered by the future Block III version of the Harpoon.

U.K.: MID-LIFE FATIGUE PROGRAMME FOR TORNADO GR4/4A

The Tornado GR4/4A fleet is set to benefit from a 28 million-pound Mid-Life Fatigue Programme (MLFP) contract, aimed at seeing the fleet through to its planned out-of-service date in 2025. The contract covers Phase 2 of an aircraft fatigue programme, which will involve one aircraft for about three years. Completion of Phase 2 will inform Phase 3, which could involve modifying 40

aircraft at a cost of around 200 million pounds. There are 138 Tornado GR4/4As, mainly operating from RAF Marham and RAF Lossiemouth. A "classified" number of aircraft are deployed in Afghanistan. A recent Ministerial Answer gave the average cost of providing logistic support to the Tornado aircraft in 2008/09 as 1.6 million pounds per aircraft.

U.K.: PROTECTED PATROL VEHICLES (PPV): WARTHOG ON SCHEDULE

ST Kinetics has just announced that the first Warthog vehicle is to roll out in Singapore on 28 September and that the first vehicles are to be delivered to the MoD by the end of 2009. Thales UK had earlier announced a 20 million-pound sub-contract from ST Kinetics, which included additional armour for the vehicles as well as electronic counter-measures equipment and communication tools. Warthog is to be deployed in Afghanistan as part of the package of PPV announced

by the defence secretary on 29 October 2008. Purchase of "over 100" Bronco PPVs from ST Kinetics for over 150 million pounds was announced on 18 December 2008. After delivery to the U.K., the vehicles will be modified and transformed into Warthogs. The new vehicles will replace the Vikings in Afghanistan and will be deployed in four variants: troop carrier, ambulance, command vehicle and repair & recovery vehicle.

FRANCE: FIRST OPERATIONS FOR TIGER HELICOPTER

With an operational availability reaching 96 per cent, the Eurocopter Tiger helicopter, made by EADS' subsidiary, is already an essential tool against insurgents in Afghanistan. The three French aircraft have accumulated over 100 flight hours since their operational deployment on 15 August. Two operations have notably been carried out (on 19-20 August and in early September): one to support the French forces on the ground, the other to support American special forces who were experiencing difficulties. During the latter case, the Tiger attack helicopter detachment was in charge of supporting the French CSAR (Combat Search & Rescue) helicopter

Caracal in charge of exfiltrating U.S. forces. A total of 426 rounds from the 30-mm gun were fired as well as 18 68-mm TDA rockets. In order to reduce the vulnerability of the aircraft, each operation takes place during dynamic flight. The goal is to avoid the mistakes made by Soviet pilots, who fired from their helicopters while in stationary position. To support the Tiger detachment, a technical unit from Eurocopter is deployed in Kabul to assist in diagnosis and to facilitate dialogue with the home office for any problems met. This is the first operational deployment of the French light army aviation's brand new attack helicopter.

ATR for Thai army

The Thai air force will receive its first ATR 72-500s in VIP version. The aircraft will be used to transport the royal family and the country's senior civilian and military authorities. This delivery is part of a contract signed in 2007 covering a total of four similar aircraft, all in VIP version. The delivery of the three ATR 72-500s is expected by the end of 2009.

VIS-X for the U.S. army

Northrop Grumman Cobham Intercoms LLC (NGCI LLC), a company formed by Northrop Grumman and Cobham, has been selected to provide the U.S. army's new VIS-X communications systems (Expanded Vehicular Intercommunication System). The contract value was not specified. While the total number of systems ordered has not been made public, NGCI LLC is committed to delivering 500 units per month, a number that will increase to 2,000 units delivered per month from 2010. Hence, the contract specifies that the total value of orders should not exceed 2.4 billion dollars over the next ten years.

Contracts for DRS

DRS Technologies (Finmeccanica group) has just been awarded a 1.9 billion-dollar contract by the U.S. Army Communications and Electronics

Command for the delivery of IR systems. The contract, which is subdivided into several batches and lasts for five years, has also generated interest among the U.S. Marine Corps, U.S. navy, U.S. air force and U.S. SOCOM. For the Italian group, this is another success that significantly strengthens its position overseas. Indeed, by the end of the year, Finmeccanica expects to deliver 21 per cent of its sales in the U.S. (compared with one per cent in 2004), with 24 per cent of deliveries in Italy and 12 per cent in the United Kingdom.

Equipment for Caracas

During his recent visit to Russia, Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez received a loan of 2.2 billion dollars for arms purchases. With this money, Caracas will be able to acquire several S-300 anti-aircraft missile batteries as well as 92 T-90 battle tanks.

AW-139 for Japan

The Japan National Police Agency (JNPA) has placed an order with AgustaWestland (Finmeccanica group) for an AW139 helicopter to replace the AS332L1, currently operated by Chiba prefecture. With this latest order from JNPA, the number of AW139s in service in Japan and intended for law enforcement missions

increases to three aircraft: the first two units were selected by the Tokyo Metropolitan Police Department. In Japan, the AW139 is also used by the Coast Guard for search and rescue missions.

NATO exercise

The NATO exercise "Bold Avenger" began on 13 September and will run until 24 September from Air Base Karup, in Denmark. The French detachment includes an E-3F radar aircraft (from the airbase of Avord), two C160 NG transport aircraft (airbase of Evreux) as well as four Mirage 2000 Ns from the airbases of Luxeuil and Istres.

U.S. chemical weapons

One of the legacy of the Cold war has been the disposal of tons of chemical weapons, currently stored in six Army installations like the Blue Grass Army Depot in Kentucky, which hosts more than 520 tons of liquid VX and sarin and mustard. In the 1980's, the estimated cost to destroy these lethal stockpiles ranged around 600 millions dollars, now it has skyrocketed to 40 billion dollars, as deterioration, leaks and corrosion issues have entered the picture. In Kentucky, a new 3 billion dollar-complex is starting to be built in order to destroy the Blue Grass depot

stockpile. The process is as a matter of fact being accelerated by the Obama administration, but the United States are behind schedule as far as international law and federal law are concerned: indeed, the international treaty requires total destruction by 2012 and the US law by 2017, but the odds are that the process might be fully completed only by 2021...

Raytheon contract

The US Air Force has concluded a 77.4 million dollar contract with Raytheon Missile Systems to provide Korea and Taiwan with precision-attacks missiles: in this case, 250 new infrared-guided Maverick air-to-surface missiles AGM-65D and AGM-65G2 are to be built and supported through their life-cycle. The kill rate of this family of missiles is higher than 90%.

Patriot Pac-3

Boeing has just completed its tenth year of production of the sensor for the Patriot anti-missile missile in its Advanced Capability-3 (PAC-3) and will deliver the one-thousandth unit to Lockheed Martin, the programme's prime contractor. The "hit to kill" PAC-3 missile, which has been in service within the U.S. army since 2001, is the latest version of the Patriot.