

**OPENING STATEMENT OF U.S. SENATOR JIM INHOFE  
RANKING MEMBER, SENATE ARMED SERVICES COMMITTEE  
ROOM SD-G50**

**DIRKSEN SENATE OFFICE BUILDING**

**Thursday, July 21, 2022**

*To consider the nominations of Lieutenant General Bryan P. Fenton, USA to be general and Commander, United States Special Operations Command; and Lieutenant General Michael E. Langley, USMC to be general and Commander, United States Africa Command*

(As delivered)

**INHOFE:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and thanks to the nominees for being with us today. They've been nominated to oversee commands that are critical to implementing our National Defense Strategy. Once again they're coming out.

I've always viewed Africa as critical to our national security which is why I pushed for the creation of AFRICOM. I did start the AFRICOM. We didn't have — Africa was a part of three different commands at one time, and we changed that, gave them their own command. The only thing we didn't do right was we didn't get the resources in there that they needed. So, despite this the AFRICOM has never been given the resources that they intended to receive.

Our adversaries aren't making the same mistake that we are. I've seen it first-hand during my 168 country visits in the African continent.

I understand that DOD is considering plans that would further diminish support to the command, including merging AFRICOM special operations component with EUCOM and cutting manpower at the Army's component focus. Now, I don't know that this is true, but I have heard from four different sources, unrelated, that these plans to downgrade are out there. And it's very important that we understand this and that we get to the bottom as to why, what needs to be done there.

So, let me be clear. I would strongly oppose any such efforts. I would urge my colleagues to do the same. Given the growing strategic importance of Africa to the national security, this would be short-sighted and would be making implementing the NDS in Africa much harder.

Now, I look to our nominees to describe to us and the American people why it's important the United States stay meaningfully engaged on the continent, and back it up with necessary resources. It's long overdue right now.

So, General Langley, once you assume your role, I want you to keep in mind the legacy of AFRICOM, what it is and how far we've come and how much more work needs to be done. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

###