

The Secret Battle for Africa

[The Secret Battle for Africa](#)

by [James Corbett](#), [The Corbett Report](#)

August 11, 2018

In October 2017 United States African Command [confirmed](#) that three Green Berets had been killed and two more had been wounded when their patrol was ambushed in Niger. Reaction to this news from the non-Corbett Report audience was: “What? There’s a United States African Command?” followed swiftly by “What are Green Berets doing conducting patrols in Niger, anyway?”

First things first: As my long-time viewers [will be aware](#), there is indeed a United States African Command (AFRICOM). It was established in 2007 and has been the spearhead of Uncle Sam’s attempts to gain a military foothold on the African continent. My viewers will likewise be aware that the whole [Kony 2012 psyop](#) was similarly [used as a cynical ploy](#) to increase American military intervention in Africa.

But the extent of US Special Forces penetration in Africa (also reported on [in these pages](#) in recent years) is a reality that is still only gradually being revealed to the public. A recent congressional review of the incident in Niger has again cast a spotlight on the use of Special Forces around the world, with the Pentagon now [floating the possibility](#) that they will cut back on commandos in Africa to concentrate on the “real” enemies: Russia and China.

There are two things wrong with this narrative. First, as a [recent investigation](#) by Nick Turse points out, the number of US Special Forces deployed in Africa has not budged at all so far. In fact, the use of such forces has dramatically expanded

over the past decade. Back in 2006, just 70 Special Operations troops were operating in Africa, equivalent to 1% of Uncle Sam's global deployment of Special Forces. By the time of the Niger operation last year, that number had swelled to nearly 1,400, or 16.5% of all US commandos deployed overseas. So far, despite rhetoric about reducing African deployments, that number has not changed.

But perhaps more importantly, the Pentagon's assertion that they will cut back on Special Forces in Africa to concentrate on enemies like China is a misdirection. Even a cursory review of the evidence shows that one important reason the US is deploying so many commandos to Africa in the first place is precisely to counter Chinese interests on the continent.

Oh, yes, of course these forces' official mission (to the extent that this is ever acknowledged) is to conduct (as the Old Grey Presstitute [puts it](#)) "shadow wars against terrorists in Yemen, Libya, Somalia and other hot spots." But consider this: US participation in the NATO intervention in Libya in 2011 was motivated by [a number of factors](#), one of them being a desire to [block Chinese oil companies](#) from continuing their development of the country's resources.

The Libyan case is but one example of a much broader phenomenon. The truth is that there is a concerted battle taking place between the US and China right now for the jewel of Africa's resources. But this battle is taking place almost entirely in the shadows, as the central role of Special Forces operators might suggest.

The battle came to the forefront a decade ago, when the MSM started parroting their political and corporate paymasters' alarm about [China's rise](#) as the "[new colonial power](#)" in Africa, even worrying that China was "[taking over](#)" the continent. This hysteria over China's influence in the region conveniently paved the way for the US establishment of AFRICOM in 2007, with even the BBC [forced to address](#) the Chinese

elephant in the room when discussing America's military presence in Africa.

Typically, Uncle Sam is treating this battle as primarily a military one. This is obvious from America's participation in the destruction of Libya, their ongoing presence in Somalia and Niger and other "terrorist hotspots," and their deployment of Special Forces.

Also typically, China is treating this battle as primarily a trade issue. This is why they are signing agreements to bring countries like [Kenya](#) and [Senegal](#) and [Rwanda](#) into their ever-expanding trillion dollar Belt and Road investment project. This is also why they have invested heavily in infrastructure projects all over the African continent, from [Ethiopia](#) to [Angola](#) to [Tanzania](#). Heck, the Chinese even gave Sudan \$146 million for the Aldaera Althaletha (Alrwesirs ,, Khartoum) project. "What is the Aldaera Althaletha (Alrwesirs ,, Khartoum) project?" you ask. Good question. [No one seems to know](#). But it's probably important.

Long story short: China is sloshing money around Africa like a drunken sailor, generally trying to buy happiness and good will and . . . and . . . something else . . . what was it again? . . . Oh, that's right: access to resources. They're buying access to African resources. When China helps Sudan to upgrade the rail link between Khartoum and Port Sudan, they're not just trying to give their African friends the warm fuzzies; they're trying to improve their access to Sudanese oil.

Of course, this process of "checkbook diplomacy" is not always as benign as it sounds. When China moved into Madagascar to spread their investment money around, the natives rejoiced . . . until they started [complaining](#) that they were being strong-armed into selling their land to their new Chinese overlords for less than a penny per acre.

And when China paid for the construction of the African Union's headquarters in 2012—even constructing the building with materials shipped from China—everyone thought it was a gesture of goodwill and friendship. That is, until earlier this year when *Le Monde* published [a report](#) alleging that the Chinese had bugged the building from its inception, collecting data on African leaders until their efforts were discovered in 2017. The report was [quickly denied](#), but the AU's joint press conference with Chinese officials denying the allegations also featured Beijing's promise to host another summit with African leaders this September. And such a summit brings it with the promise of tens of billions of dollars in further investment projects, so there may have been some financial incentive for the AU to downplay the issue.

China's investment in Africa has raised the charge that it is engaging in a form of neo-colonialism of the continent, bribing leaders with sweetheart deals to gain access to their country's natural resources. But don't make that charge in China. Sun Wenguang, a retired professor, wrote an open letter to President-For-Life Xi denouncing China's checkbook diplomacy in Africa . . . and was promptly [kidnapped by Chinese security forces](#) during a live TV interview, never to be seen again.

This is not to say that China is not also preparing for military engagement on the continent. China chose Djibouti as the site of its [first overseas military base](#) last year for obvious reasons. Djibouti sits on the Gulf of Aden, providing a strategic seaway that is increasingly important for shipping African resources to China. It's no surprise then that China—which is increasingly flexing its naval might and [building up its military](#)—is looking to start formally protecting its billions of dollars of investments with some military assets.

Still, if it's a question of optics, there's no doubt that China's checkbook diplomacy is earning it more friends in

Africa than Uncle Sam's gun-barrel diplomacy. As I've pointed out before, former Libyan leader Moammar Gaddafi made this very point in an [address to Oxford University students](#) shortly before his assassination by NATO-backed terrorists.

“China does not lecture African countries about their system of government, human rights, freedom of expression, good governance or such like,” Gaddafi explained. “China never interferes in the internal affairs of other states. It does not bring in soldiers, military bases or military command. More than 600 Chinese corporations are penetrating deep into Africa. Some Chinese communities have started to settle in Africa. This is China’s soft approach.” “Because of that soft approach, Africans are welcoming China warmly. This will no doubt be to China’s benefit. Africans are wary of the US because of its harsh approach. This is proof of the folly of American policy.”

And so the US finds itself in the awkward predicament of having a formally designated African Command but no military base on the continent. No one really wants them there. And this is why for the present time the US military presence in Africa is largely a covert one, only brought to the public's attention when things go very wrong, as in Niger.

And, sadly, this is also why Africa is a prime target for yet another [war lie](#), designed to get the American public on board with a more overt form of American military presence on the continent.

[Connect with James Corbett](#)

cover image credit: [qimono](#) / pixabay