



## Horn Of Africa Task Force Fights Own War On Terror

*Anton Menning, Freelance Journalist*

POSTED: 2:49 pm CDT August 3, 2006

UPDATED: 8:23 am CDT August 8, 2006

**FORT LEAVENWORTH, Kan.** -- Operating on a shoestring budget and overshadowed by operations in Iraq and Afghanistan, Combined Joint Task Force Horn of Africa (CJTF HOA) combats terrorism in its own way.

"If we don't help people to help themselves in this region, then it will be the next Afghanistan," Lt. Colonel Shawn Cupp said. "Combined Joint Task Force HOA was established to prevent the spread of transnational terrorism and provide humanitarian relief to an impoverished area of the world."

Cupp is currently an Assistant Professor at the United States Army Command and General Staff College (CGSC), located at Fort Leavenworth, but he served in CJTF HOA in late 2005 and early 2006 as a logistics officer.

The Horn of Africa loosely comprises the geographic areas of Somalia, Djibouti, Eritrea, Ethiopia and Kenya. Yemen, despite its location on the Arabian Peninsula, is also considered part of the Horn by the military because of its proximity to the African Continent (less than 30 miles across the Bab El Mandeb Strait) and historical linkages to the region.

The U.S. dominated core of CJTF HOA consists of elements of all the major services -- Marines, Army, Navy and Air Force. The JTF has a strength of approximately 1,400 servicemen who are part of U.S. Central Command, or CENTCOM. Although the East African countries of Uganda and Tanzania, the Central African country of Sudan and the Indian Ocean countries of Seychelles and Comoros do not officially fall in the Horn of Africa Command's area of responsibility, CJTF HOA operates in these countries because of their proximity to the Horn.

Problems abound, many connected with failed or ineffective regimes. Effective governance, defined by a country's ability to levy taxes and provide official services, remains a problem throughout the region, Cupp said.

Somalia has been without a functional government since Mohammed Siad Barre's ouster in 1991. Sudan's National Government of Salvation has never effectively controlled Southern Sudan, which borders Ethiopia, Kenya and Uganda. In addition, Ethiopia's government—located at Addis Abbaba, the capital -- only controls approximately 40% of its geographical area. Northern Kenya is nominally controlled by Nairobi. Djibouti is



Djiboutian Army Maj. Fouad points out details of Djibouti to U.S. Army Lt. Col. Cupp.

the only regional country which controls its borders and effectively governs its territory. Regional stability is a longstanding problem in the Horn of Africa. Ethiopia and Eritrea fought a border war from 1998-2000. The Sudanese People's Liberation Army (SPLA) only recently ended a 50-year insurrection against the government in Khartoum.

Meanwhile, the ongoing humanitarian crisis in Darfur threatens continuing destabilization in west-central Sudan. The Lord's Republican Army (LRA) continues to fight for autonomy in Northern Uganda. In Somalia, Islamic militias battle the Transitional Federal Government for control of the country. In addition, the embassy bombings in Kenya and Tanzania in 1998 demonstrated Al-Qaeda's ability to strike East Africa, traditionally one of the more stable regions in Africa.

In this complicated region, CJTF HOA established a headquarters at Camp Lemonier, a former French military base in Djibouti, in late 2002.

"We have experienced terrorism before and are united with the United States in their effort to combat terrorism," Djiboutian Major Fouad Elmi Waiss, CGSC student, said.

The Djiboutian government offered the United States the use of its territory for the Global War on Terror (GWOT) fight shortly after 9/11.

The tools CJTF HOA employs in its fight against terrorism and poverty aim at addressing the power vacuums created by weak states while creating geographical buffers between lawless areas and state controlled regions.

To this end, Civil Affairs (CA) units provide humanitarian assistance to residents of the region through medical civil action plans (MEDCAPS), veterinarian civil action plans (VETCAPS) and dental civil action plans (DENTCAPS.) When implementing a MEDCAP or VETCAP, CA units journey into areas of Ethiopia, Kenya or Djibouti and set up a treatment center where local residents and their livestock receive healthcare.

"We are trying to provide an alternative to identifying with terrorist groups for local residents," Cupp said.

Infrastructure reconstruction and well drilling for water are other tools employed by CJTF HOA. Contractors provide drilling expertise and tap water, lying far below the surface in a very arid environment, for use by local residents. To ensure the sustainability of their efforts, many well pumps are solar powered or hand-cranked.

Naval Engineers, known as SEABEES, participate in reconstruction projects where schools are renovated and roads are built. In addition to humanitarian aid, CJTF HOA provides military-to-military training to friendly countries in the region to assist in counterterrorism. The nature of the training encompasses defensive operations and all trainees are thoroughly vetted for past ties to terrorist groups or war crimes, Cupp said.

Due to its small budget, JTF HOA continues to confront the challenge of integrating its humanitarian efforts with non-governmental organizations and other governmental organizations such as USAID, in an attempt to expand their reach and magnify their impact on the region.

"We are people helping people," Cupp said.

*Copyright 2006 by [TheKansasCityChannel.com](http://TheKansasCityChannel.com). All rights reserved. This material may not be published, broadcast, rewritten or redistributed.*