

DEFENSE ENVIRONMENTAL COOPERATION WITH SOUTH AFRICA

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The Problem

Environmental considerations, such as water and air pollution, can affect military training and deployment areas, posing a challenge to the safety of US troops and to mission execution.

Over the years, Department of Defense (DoD) officials have increasingly come to appreciate that giving due thought to environmental considerations is not so much about hugging trees and protecting tortoises as it is supporting the war-fighter and the mission. First, it is vital to consider the impact that the environment can have on the safety and health of our troops. For example, while environmental factors will rarely, if ever, be the deciding factor in selecting the location for an operating base, at least being aware of environmental conditions in the area when making this selection can help protect the deploying troops from environmental hazards that can affect their safety and health. Second, the environment can impact our ability to train our forces and execute the mission. For instance, if restrictions are placed on the use of training areas because these areas are also a critical habitat for endangered species, the military's training schedule can be adversely affected.

With this in mind, the US-South African Defense Committee's Environmental Security Working Group (ESWG) has convened teams of subject matter experts (SMEs) from the United States and South Africa to develop a series of guidebooks on various defense-related environmental topics that can be used by militaries throughout the world. This article describes two guidebooks to which IDA contributed.

One guidebook, *Environmental Considerations during Military Operations*, addresses the entire life cycle of military operations (i.e., mission planning, pre-deployment, deployment, and post-deployment) and how environmental factors can affect the safety and well-being of deployed forces and the execution of the mission.

The messages contained in the *Environmental Considerations* guidebook were well-received within US interagency circles and by the international community. The Department of State expressed its interest in using this information for some of its instructional activities in Africa. It leads the Africa Contingency Operations and Training Assistance (ACOTA) program, which provides training and assistance in peacekeeping to countries in Africa. At ACOTA's request, the ESWG incorporated the key

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themes of the guidebook into a series of three briefings (for commanders, environmental officers, and all deploying troops) and corresponding Programs of Instruction for use by ACOTA. ACOTA has since made this material available for brigade-level training at its peacekeeping training centers in Africa.

Internationally, Swedish and Finnish environmental experts in their respective defense establishments immediately recognized the importance of the *Environmental Considerations* guidebook and its applicability for use in Europe as well. As a result, US SMEs worked with representatives

from these two countries to create a modified version of this guidebook. This version has since been briefed to the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) School, parts of the European Commission, and the Defense Network (an unofficial group of defense environmental leaders from European Union (EU) nations). The Swedish Armed Forces are now leading an effort to use this guidebook as the foundation for environmental practices and policies to be used in EU peacekeeping operations. The work has also been integrated into NATO Science for Peace and Stability initiatives, with the goal of providing guidelines for future NATO operations.



US-South Africa team, which created the Outreach for Mission Sustainability guidebook, on a visit to Luke Air Force Base (AFB) in August 2009. **Front:** Joe Knott, Annelle Human. **Back:** Etienne van Blerk, Clare Mendelsohn, Tommie Arpin, Eric Mali, Susan Clark-Sestak. Missing from photograph: Jan Larkin. **Photo Credit:** Kevin O’Berry of Luke AFB.

Another recent guidebook, *Outreach for Mission Sustainability*, created by SMEs from the United States and South Africa, examines how encroachment can negatively affect military training and readiness by restricting the timing, duration, intensity, and so forth of this training. Examples of such encroachment include commercial development, light pollution, competition for radio frequency, and requirements to protect endangered species or habitats. The guidebook explains the value of the military in developing outreach programs to reduce the impact of these pressures. This outreach—working with the local community and other government agencies at the federal, regional, and local level—has proven its value in helping to ensure mission sustainability at military bases. In writing this guidebook, the team drew on US and South African experiences at military bases and made site visits to the Yuma Training Range Complex, Luke AFB, Davis-Monthan AFB, and Camp Navajo National Guard Base.

The *Outreach* guidebook lays out a process for creating an outreach program and explains how such a program can be used to address mission sustainability challenges such as urban encroachment, noise pollution, endan-

gered species protection, and alternative energy use. The ultimate objective of such an effort is to develop compatible civilian and military land use plans.

Already, the US DoD and the South Africa Defense Forces are making extensive use of the *Outreach* guidebook. It is one of the key reference documents for a course that DoD is developing for personnel charged with outreach responsibilities. South Africa has widely distributed this guidebook to its military personnel. It will also form the basis for a US-South African jointly sponsored workshop that will bring together a full range of government personnel, members of the local community and representatives from non-governmental organizations, and representatives from several other Southern African nations.

Ms. Clark-Sestak is a research staff member at IDA. Her work on international environmental security issues in support of the US Office of the Deputy Under Secretary of Defense for Installations and Environment includes projects on base conversion and reuse, pollution prevention, and Arctic military cooperation.

Sources:

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