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Remarks at the ACSS Dedication by Douglas J. Feith*Douglas J. Feith, Under Secretary of Defense for Policy**Remarks at the Dedication of Africa Center for Strategic Studies Building**Davis Hall, Fort McNair, Washington, D.C.**Tuesday, 29 June, 2004*

Author: Douglas J. Feith

General Fulford, members of the diplomatic community, National Defense University and Pentagon colleagues, Africa Center staff, ladies and gentlemen: thank you for allowing me to join you on this gratifying occasion. The Africa Center is one of the newest of the five Department of Defense Regional Centers for Security Studies. The Center's importance to us is reflected in the excellence of this new facility and even more in the experience and stature of its Director, General Carl Fulford. The Secretary of Defense, the other leaders of the Defense Department and officials throughout the U.S. Government value the Africa Center's work. We rely on the Center to help us understand African affairs and their relationship to US national interests.

The Africa Center helps inform us on how best to cooperate with our counterparts in Ministries of Defense across Africa. The Center illuminates such topics as: terrorism, AIDS and the creation of professional, civilian-controlled militaries. Through the Africa Center, we hope to work with both future and current leaders-- students, alumni, officials, and others reached by the Center's programs. We count on all of you here today to help this effort thrive. Several months ago at the Africa Center's Senior Leader Seminar, Deputy Secretary of Defense Wolfowitz mentioned that after 9/11,

US interests have been recognized ever more clearly to be global, not narrowly focused on only a few regions. For many reasons, Africa is important to the United States.

At the Defense Department, we have focused on cultivating military-to-military relationships. We have worked recently with Liberia's regional neighbors to help consolidate peace in that distressed country. and we are concentrating now on: the crisis in Darfur, Sudan, and what to do about a country that promotes war against part of its own population; the growing tension in eastern Democratic Republic of Congo and the potential for humanitarian crisis there; and the continuing and dangerous border dispute between Ethiopia and Eritrea. We also see some bright spots: the willingness of ECOWAS, the West African Economic Community, to engage in peacekeeping operations.

We are working with the United Kingdom, France, Canada, and several other countries to support ECOWAS peacekeeping capacity-building for that 15-country region; the recognition by the African Union that its countries need to develop the capacity to conduct peacekeeping and humanitarian operations, which led to its proposal for the creation of a standby military force. We salute those efforts and look forward to assisting African countries to improve their capabilities through the African Contingency Operations Training and Assistance -- or ACOTA -- program, and the Global Peace Operations Initiative, which the G-8 adopted earlier this month, at the summit in Sea Island, Georgia; and the expanding number of African countries that are successfully addressing the problems of economic development and health crises, while strengthening democratic institutions. We salute all these constructive efforts!

Under the leadership of General Fulford and his first-class academic team, the Africa Center will continue to be an instrument of outreach to improve ties between the United States and our African partners. The Africa Center will now be headquartered here at Davis Hall, which is named after Brigadier General Benjamin O. Davis, the first African-American General Officer in the U.S. armed forces. General Davis served as the US military attaché in Liberia before World War I. He was detailed to the Department of State during the period between the World Wars to work on issues related to Liberia. Naming the Africa Center after General Davis honors his service to this country and to Liberia, and reminds us of the profound personal as well as national ties that connect the United States to Africa. Thank you very much.

Mr. Feith was Under Secretary of Defense for Policy from July 2001 to August 2005

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