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UNCLASSIFIED

ENDORSEMENT MEMO FOR HENRIETTA H. FORE

FROM: AMBASSADOR EUNICE S. REDDICK
AMERICAN EMBASSY LIBREVILLE

SUBJECT: Fiscal Year 2008 Operational Plan for Gabon – Phase I
(Performance Report on Fiscal Year 2007)

On behalf of the U.S. Mission in Libreville, I am pleased to submit Phase I of the FY 2008 Gabon Operational Plan for your consideration, consisting of the Performance report on Fiscal Year 2007. This report highlights the significant results of USG assistance and investment in light of the political and economic situation in Gabon during FY 2007.

Gabon is one of Africa's most stable countries despite its location in a volatile region. When nearby conflicts have threatened the safety of American citizens, Gabon has provided safe haven for evacuees. Gabon has been a helpful partner to the United States in the Central Africa region, in Africa as a whole, and in multilateral fora such as the UN. Gabonese President El Hadj Omar Bongo Ondimba's seniority among African leaders and his knowledge of regional issues have allowed him and his nation to play an important role in preventing, mitigating and resolving regional conflicts. Gabon is also a leading member of the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS, or CEEAC in its French acronym), based in Libreville.

During FY 2007, Post was heavily engaged in supporting DOD and State in evaluations of the potential deployment of an element of the new United States Africa Command (AFRICOM) to Gabon. AFRICOM has identified CEEAC as a potential partner in regional security initiatives, and CEEAC has been authorized by the African Union to take the lead in creating a standby brigade for peacekeeping and related operations.

As detailed in our report, the United States has trained Gabonese forces under the African Contingency Operations Training Assistance (ACOTA) program, and today Gabon leads the peacekeeping forces in the Central African Republic, providing the majority of deployed forces there. Members of the Gabonese armed forces receive professional training under the International Military Education and Training (IMET) programs. To promote the security of the strategic Gulf of Guinea region, origin of a growing share of U.S. oil imports, U.S. military engagement with Gabon has developed in several areas, including training exercises, ship visits, and high-level exchanges.

President Bongo has held office since 1967 and in December 2005 he was re-elected for a new seven-year term. Although the 2005 presidential election was marred by irregularities, legislative elections in December 2006, in which the ruling Gabonese Democratic Party (PDG) won two-thirds of the seats, were deemed free and fair by independent observers. However, a single party -- the PDG -- has remained in power since 1968, and democratic institutions, particularly civil society, remain weak. No single issue dominates politics in Gabon more than the question of who will succeed President Bongo, aged 72. No clear successor has emerged; nor is it clear that Bongo will retire when his current seven-year term ends in 2012.

Gabon is one of sub-Saharan Africa's most prosperous nations, thanks to its oil wealth. Oil accounts for 77% of Gabon's exports, 56% of government revenues, and 45% of GDP. Although oil earnings have given Gabon one of the highest per capita GDPs in sub-Saharan Africa, income distribution is extremely skewed. Gabon's ranking on human development indicators is not commensurate with its per capita GDP ranking. Recent high oil prices have increased revenues, but oil production and revenues are expected to decline over the next decade—while production in the Gulf of Guinea as a whole increases, and while the region grows to account for up to 25% of U.S. oil imports. To increase economic opportunity for its citizens, Gabon must move from a single-resource petroleum-based economy to a diversified economy driven by the private sector and focused on poverty reduction.

Nearly 85% of Gabon is covered by forests with rich and diversified resources. In 2002, President Bongo set aside 11% of Gabon's territory to create a national park system, but the nation's continued commitment to environmentally responsible management requires support. Gabon seeks to develop ecotourism as part of its economic diversification strategy. However, high raw material prices have spurred interest in exploration and resource extraction in many new areas, and these sometimes generate conflicts with conservation projects. Continued political and financial support from the United States and continued engagement by international NGOs will be required to sustain progress in this area. In 2002, the United States launched the Congo Basin Forest Partnership at the World Summit on Sustainable Development, recognizing the importance of the world's second largest tropical forest. Since then, the United States has worked closely with Gabon and five other countries of the Congo Basin, other donor countries, private sector entities, and NGOs to help conserve and sustainably manage the Congo Basin forests.

While the foreign assistance to Gabon captured in the FY 2007 Operating Plan consisted solely of \$236,000 in International Military Assistance and Training (IMET) funds the USG provided significant additional assistance in the area of regional security and conflict prevention (with cross-cutting support for counter terrorism goals). The USG also provided modest amounts of additional assistance to support other goals. The USG-funded Central African Regional Program for the Environment (CARPE) plays a pivotal role in implementing USG programs to support Gabonese conservation, ecotourism and sustainable development. Funding from Ambassador's Self Help Fund, The Ambassador's Girls Scholarship Program, and the Democracy and Human Rights Fund

helped support our goals of strengthening civil society, promoting democracy, encouraging private sector-led economic growth and fighting poverty.

Gabon 2007 Performance Report

Operating Unit Performance Summary

Post significantly exceeded FY 2007 objectives, and its military-to-military program with Gabon is expanding rapidly. In addition to the training selected as a specific performance indicator ("US-trained personnel at national leadership levels") post carried out a wide range of other activities.

Post was heavily engaged in supporting DOD and State in evaluations of the potential deployment of an element of the new United States Africa Command (AFRICOM) to Gabon. In conjunction with these efforts, and with funding from Washington, post sponsored the participation of two senior officials at an important AFRICOM planning conference in Maryland. One participant represented Gabon, the other the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS, or CEEAC in its French acronym).

Post had six ship visits by U.S. naval vessels in FY 2007. U.S. naval personnel provided a variety of training in conjunction with these visits, including maintenance, damage control and first aid.

An ad hoc, composite "battalion" of about 425 Gabonese forces participated in Washington-funded African Contingency Operations Training Assistance (ACOTA) training during FY 2007. The focus of the training was on peacekeeping operations.

A significant "MEDFLAG" exercise was conducted in FY 2007 involving Gabonese and U.S. armed forces medical personnel. 250 Gabonese medical personnel participated in the two-week exercise, which took place in the interior provincial capital of Lambarene.

Post sponsored a variety of other training in FY 2007 under the IMET program. This included one officer to a Quartermaster/Logistics Course (27 weeks), one sergeant to an English Instructor's course (32 weeks), four officers to an HIV/AIDS conference, one officer to a peacekeeping operations course (17 weeks) and one officer to a basic officers engineering course.

Using Washington-provided "1206" funding for counter terrorism capacity building, post provided the Gabonese navy with four coastal patrol boats, spare parts, transport, and associated training. Additional 1206 resources were used to fund a survey and assessment of existing air radar capabilities and potential additional, integrated regional air control capabilities.

Program Area Performance \ 1 Peace & Security \ 1.3 Stabilization Operations and Security Sector Reform

Foreign Assistance to Sao Tome-Principe (STP) captured in the FY 2007 Operating Plan consisted solely of \$198,000 in International Military Assistance and Training (IMET). This assistance represented only a fraction of post's activities to support regional security and related objectives. "Regional Cooperation for Security and Stability" is one of the Mission's four MSP goals and post carried out a wide range of diplomatic and military activities in support of this goal. These efforts also supported USG counter-terrorism objectives. Though our efforts were focused on STP, they were integrated with genuinely regional initiatives and retained a regional focus.

Under IMET, 45 persons from the STP military, the STP National Assembly, and NGOs attended a civil-military seminar on the role of the national legislature in military oversight and national security issues, including border security. Post judges this seminar to have been a success. However, the focus of training in FY 2008 will be changed to small boat operations and logistics administration for the Sao Tome Coast Guard.

STP had five ship visits by U.S. naval vessels in FY 2007. U.S. naval personnel provided a variety of training in conjunction with these visits, including maintenance, damage control and first aid. These activities were a prelude to the more intensive program of ship visits and related activities in FY 2008 under the U.S. Navy's Africa Partnership Station (APS) initiative, intended to increase our engagement in the strategically significant Gulf of Guinea. STP also received significant assistance through Washington-based "1206" funds, including two coastal patrol boats, improved maritime radar capability, and an assessment of potential improvements in air radar capability.

Program Element Performance \ 1 Peace & Security \ 1.3 Stabilization Operations and Security Sector Reform \ 1.3.6 Defense, Military, and Border Restructuring, Reform and Operations

Foreign Assistance to the Gabonese Republic captured in the FY 2007 Operating Plan consisted solely of \$236,000 in International Military Assistance and Training (IMET). This assistance represented only a fraction of post's activities to support regional security and related objectives.

Under IMET, post sent two national-level members of the armed forces to training, one less than the target of three. This was due to an adjustment of program objectives following receipt of final funding allocations. IMET funds were also used to send eight officers to a variety of other training.

Post was also heavily engaged in supporting DOD and State in evaluations for the potential deployment of an element of the new United States Africa Command (AFRICOM) to Gabon. Post had six ship visits by U.S. naval vessels. U.S. naval personnel provided a variety of training in conjunction with these visits. A composite "battalion" of about 425 Gabonese forces participated in African Contingency Operations Training Assistance (ACOTA) peacekeeping training. 250 Gabonese medical personnel participated in a significant "MEDFLAG" exercise. Finally, post provide four patrol vessels to the Gabonese Navy through Washington-based "1206" funding.

Gabonese cooperation and support were generally very good. Interaction with the Minister of Defence and senior uniformed personnel was generally excellent. There were, however, occasional administrative difficulties in coordination at other levels. Because of the small size of the Gabonese armed forces and their commitment to a peacekeeping operation in the Central African Republic, it was sometimes difficult to secure backup personnel for various scheduled courses and programs. Lack of English language capability by some key liaison personnel, and by personnel selected for training, was a significant handicap at times. Post's defense attache office has two U.S. military personnel and one locally employed staff. These personnel are also responsible for liaison and U.S. military activities and assistance in the separate nation of Sao Tome and Principe. Post was without a permanently assigned defence attache for more than half of FY 2007.

Gender factors: Women are integrated into the Gabonese armed forces, although their numbers are relatively small. Units are not gender-specific. One of the national-level individuals who received training in FY 2007 was female.

1 Peace & Security - Gabon

1.3 Stabilization Operations and Security Sector Reform\1.3.6 Defense, Military, and Border Restructuring, Reform and

Number of US trained personnel at national leadership levels

2006 *	FY 2007 Target	FY 2007 Actual	2008 Original Target	2008 Revised Target
3	3	2	1	2

929

1.3.6 Defense, Military, and Border Restructuring, Reform and Operations narrative (no more than 1500 characters)

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During FY 2007, post sent two national-level officers from the small Gabonese armed force to courses in the United States. Specifically, Gabonese military personnel attended the U.S. Air Command and Staff College and a 30-week Squadron Officer Course. In FY 2008, post intends to send officers to both the Air Command and Staff College and the Army War College. As detailed in the Chief of Mission Endorsement Letter, these activities represent only a fraction of the security assistance and other initiatives actually implemented in Gabon in FY 2007, and planned for FY 2008. Most of these additional initiatives are centrally funded. They include an extensive program of ship visits and related training, preparation for potential deployment of an AFRICOM element, a medical exercise, peacekeeping training and significant additional training for other than national leadership-level members of the Gabonese armed forces.