



MAGHREB ROUNDTABLE

Center for Strategic and International Studies ■ Washington, D.C. ■ February 2006

SPEAKER

Major General Jonathan S. Gration is the Director of Strategy, Policy and Assessments for the U.S. European Command (EUCOM), based in Stuttgart, Germany. Gen. Gration is responsible for the formulation of basic military and political policy for EUCOM, as well as planning for command activities involving cooperation with other U.S. unified commands, allied military and international military organizations. He was raised in Africa and entered the Air Force in 1974 through the Air Force ROTC program at Rutgers University.

Gen. Gration has previously served as a White House Fellow, operations group commander, and two-time wing commander. Prior to assuming his current position, Gen. Gration served as Assistant Deputy Undersecretary of the Air Force for International Affairs. He is a command pilot with more than 5,000 flight hours, including more than 2,000 hours as an instructor pilot. In addition to numerous awards and citations, Gen. Gration holds a B.S. in mechanical engineering from Rutgers University and an M.A. in national security studies from Georgetown University. ■

THE MAGHREB: PREVENTING THE WAR ON TERROR'S NEXT FRONT

The United States urgently needs to help North African governments build regional security cooperation, military capacity and economic growth, a senior U.S. military official told a CSIS audience last week. Major General Jonathan S. Gration, who is the Director of Strategy, Policy and Assessments at the U.S. European Command (EUCOM) said that one of the greatest impediments to regional security cooperation remains persistent Algerian-Moroccan tensions over the Western Sahara, and the lack of a North African regional security organization that works through the African Union.

General Gration addressed the fourth session of CSIS's Maghreb Roundtable on February 16, 2006, where he outlined new and complex threats confronting the region from expanding terrorist networks. He said that both the U.S. military and regional armies need to adapt to confront these networks effectively. Because the United States faces a different kind of enemy in North Africa and elsewhere on the continent, he argued for a more proactive and flexible decision making process that considers the region's complexities.

Gration argued that the speed of modern conflict undermines traditional approaches to combat. For decades, American forces in combat followed an "OODA" loop: "observe, orient, decide, and act." By following such a progression, the military's actions were deliberate and purposive, mindful both of long-term strategy and effectiveness. Since the military must now react more quickly to threats, the "observe" and "orient" phases are conflated, and sometimes the "orient" phase is dropped altogether. While some argue that the nature of the current threat requires a more rapid response time than in the past, Gration argued forcefully that action without proper orientation could lose sight of its strategic objectives and fail to bring about desired results.

The activities of terrorist networks that operate in ungoverned areas of North Africa and the Sahel region are the primary threat in the Maghreb. Indigenous extremist groups and jihadi fighters fleeing Afghanistan have found safe havens near the Sahara where they are able to operate free from government interference. North African fighters have also had recent experience in Iraq, where they have learned terrorist battlefield tactics and technical skills which they bring back to Africa. Terrorists in the region often integrate with sophisticated criminal

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THE MAGHREB ROUNDTABLE SERIES

The CSIS Middle East Program launched the Maghreb Roundtable in November, 2005 to examine the strategic importance of a broad range of social, political, and economic trends in North Africa and to identify opportunities for constructive U.S. engagement. The roundtable defines the Maghreb as Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, Libya, and Mauritania. The roundtable convenes monthly, assembling a diverse group of regional experts, policymakers, academics, and business leaders seeking to build a greater understanding of the complexities of the region. Topics for discussion include the role of Islamist movements in politics, the war on terror, democratization and the limits of civil society, the strategic importance of North African energy, the effects of emigrant communities in Europe, trade liberalization, and prospects for greater regional integration. ■

networks involved in human trafficking, smuggling of contraband, and money laundering through which they fund themselves and cover their movement.

Terror networks in the region pose a transnational threat not only to the stability of the Maghreb, but to Europe as well. Terrorists have exploited North African countries' historic links to Europe, and they have preyed on alienated emigrant populations in Europe that have, in effect, created "ethnic sanctuaries for dissidents." Still, many countries of the region continue to view security in national rather than regional terms, despite the centrality of transnational ties to the networks and their operations.

To combat the spread of terror networks in the region and improve regional security cooperation, the U.S. recently launched the Trans-Sahara Counter Terror Initiative (TSCTI). TSCTI aims to strengthen the capacity of local armies, training them to operate more effectively in the ungoverned areas where terrorists find sanctuary. The program involves nine states including Morocco, Algeria, and Tunisia, and has a proposed budget of \$500 million over five years. Information sharing on cross-border movements has improved and Algerian and Moroccan officer increasingly participate in joint-training exercises. Despite improvements in information sharing between governments, especially on cross-border movements, a lot more work must be done. Gration argued that more money is needed to improve regional security efforts and that a relatively small investment can go a long way.

Despite increased training and cooperation that TSCTI brings to

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the region, the main impediment to greater regional security and military coordination remains the Western Sahara conflict. The conflict between Morocco and Algeria over sovereignty of the former Spanish colony prevents meaningful regional security coordination, stifles economic growth, and prevents intra-regional trade

from developing. Gration emphasized that the parties must find a solution to the problem before it further destabilizes the region and hampers the effectiveness of African Union peacekeeping operations.

While the countries of the region work toward normalized relations with the West, the United States has imposed many constraints on itself. Although efforts are underway to start military engagement with Tripoli, there is not yet a U.S. embassy in Libya, making it more difficult to bring Libya into vital regional security arrangements. U.S. policy toward Algeria also limits military sales to Algeria. That country's recent decision to purchase an estimated \$4 billion in fighter planes, tanks, and other sophisticated

military hardware from Russia is a loss for the United States, especially since the training and servicing requirements of equipment entail a 30-year relationship after the sale is completed.

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Gration contrasted the constrained U.S. relationship with the Maghreb with China's growing influence and activity in the region. China clearly seeks access to natural resources and energy. The Chinese government attaches virtually no strings to aid or to military sales, which have increased exponentially in the last several years. As such, the Chinese are especially effective where U.S.-imposed sanctions constrain U.S. government activity, and are actively building bilateral relationships.

Beyond the operational capacity building and training that the U.S. provides through TSCTI and other military assistance, Gration argued that part of adjusting to the changing threats in the region is an urgent need for the U.S. military to understand the values, belief systems, and language of people in the region. Part of this process requires cultural immersion and language programs for the officer corps. A greater understanding of the complexities of the region and peoples perspectives will allow for more flexible and accurate decision making.

The U.S. military and EUCOM are starting to change their approach. Not every security question has a military answer, Gration admitted. The only solution to the violence that threatens the Maghreb, he said, is a comprehensive, long-term strategy of strengthening regional security by promoting good governance based on the rule of law and democratic principles. ■-HM 02/20/06

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The CSIS Middle East Program

JON B. ALTERMAN, Director
 HAIM MALKA, Fellow
 EDWARD M. GABRIEL, Visiting Fellow
 JASON GLUCK, Visiting Fellow
 MICHAEL BALZ, Research Assistant/Program Coordinator
 RASHA AL SARRAJ AND ELIZABETH TOMBER, Interns

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