

Power to the People: OEPP and Power Africa team up to provide power to austere areas of Africa

By Troy Warshel | March 07, 2014

[Power Africa](#) is a U.S. Government initiative that addresses one of the most pressing challenges to sustainable economic growth and development in sub-Saharan Africa – access to electrical power. 12 agencies, including DoD's Army Corps of Engineers, have banded together, to pledge expertise and \$ Seven billion in resources toward a goal of doubling the number of people with access to power in Sub-Saharan Africa.



TAN TAN, Morocco - U.S. Marine Corps Reserve Colonel Anthony Fernandez, commanding officer of Task Force African Lion, inspects the solar panel of an Expeditionary Forward Operating Base module during the testing phase of this sustainable energy initiative, May 19, 2010. This new environmentally-friendly energy system would enable deployed troops to purify water, light their tents and power their equipment through solar energy. It was tested in conjunction with African Lion 2010, a U.S. Africa Command (AFRICOM)-sponsored exercise focusing on various types of military training

Many of the challenges associated with providing power to remote African locations are similar to issues DoD encounters on a regular basis during expeditionary operations. That's why, last year, as part of our mission to support the Combatant Commands, OEPP's Current Operations team attended a [CSIS hosted event for Power Africa](#). Through subsequent discussions with USAID concerning their work in Africa, [Andrew Hershcowitz](#), the newly appointed coordinator of the Power Africa initiative approached OEPP to learn more about the military's energy initiatives and determine what efforts could be cross-purposed to help electrify Africa.

In response, OEPP organized a workshop in December that brought together members of the Power Africa team, USAFRICOM, and the Services to provide information about their work in the energy field and on the continent to determine areas of potential cooperation and synergy. At the workshop, DoD highlighted our ongoing work to reduce energy at forward bases through the Operational Energy Capability Improvement (OECIF), the [Transformative Reductions in Operational Energy Consumption \(TROPEC\)](#) program, and the work of DoD's [Program Manager for Mobile Electric Power](#). USAFRICOM discussed their strategy to develop partner-security capacities, strengthen relationships, and enhance regional cooperation across Africa. In addition, we discussed similarities with

USSOUTHCOM efforts, where the command has sponsored initiatives to assess energy use, reduce spot generation, and employ renewable energy and microgrids at U.S. bases and with our partner nations Latin America.

Seeking to capitalize on the lessons learned during operations in Iraq and Afghanistan, especially with distributed power sources, OEPP agreed to act as the point of entry to coordinate DoD's efforts in support of the Power Africa mission. [The Marines Corps' ExFOB](#) and Army's Base Camp Integration Lab were identified technology demonstrations that would be beneficial for Power Africa team to learn more about.

The workshop was successful in helping both sides to understand the challenging requirements of operating on the African continent and opened a dialogue for continued cooperation and ongoing partnership. We know that development and trade – which require electricity - can lead to prosperity and stability. And because stability in Africa can help reduce conflict and violent extremism, these efforts, led by USAID, and supported by the military and the other Federal agencies are critical to our own national security.

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