HIV/AIDS in Africa
U.S. Department of Defense Initiative

INTRODUCTION

Recognizing the impact of the HIV/AIDS pandemic on Africa, the U.S. has joined the International Partnership Against HIV/AIDS in Africa (IPAA) to try to mitigate its impact and stop its spread. A key component of U.S. participation in the IPAA is a program that expands the U.S. government's response to the growing HIV/AIDS pandemic in Africa (hereafter called "the initiative"). For fiscal year 2000-2001, this Initiative provided several hundred million dollars in U.S. support for HIV/AIDS prevention, care, and treatment in sub-Saharan Africa and India. Of this funding, $10 million has been provided to the Department of Defense (DoD) to reduce the spread of HIV among military personnel in selected African countries.

SYNOPSIS OF THE INITIATIVE

In Africa, HIV rates in military and uniformed populations often exceed the rates in the civilian populations, with soldiers frequently deployed on long tours of duty. In sub-Saharan Africa, various ministries of defense have reported seroprevalence rates as high as twenty percent among military personnel. Experience with HIV prevention in the U.S. military and among basic trainees in Thailand provides a possible model for effective intervention in African military populations. It has been demonstrated that assessment of knowledge, attitudes, and behaviors, coupled with epidemiological measurements, can be completed while maintaining confidentiality and with a high level of voluntary participation. Assessment of the components of HIV risk in African military populations developed the regional profile to design and guide prevention activities.

The Initiative focuses on training and prevention activities for African military and uniformed services within selected Africa countries where the USG has defense ties. Countries with historic defense relationships with the U.S. will receive highest priority. However, assistance in kind will be extended to any African country (not under policy sanction) as resources permit.

POLICY OBJECTIVES

DoD has established four objectives for the Initiative.

- Assist selected African countries in adapting and providing military-based HIV prevention programs.
- Train military personnel in selected African military countries to implement, maintain, and evaluate HIV prevention programs.
- Assist selected African countries in the development of military culture interventions to affect high-risk HIV attitudes and behaviors.

- Integrate with, and make use of, other U.S. Government programs and those managed by allies and the United Nations.

STATUS OF THE INITIATIVE

The United States Navy has been appointed as the Department's Executive Agent and has appointed the Naval Health Research Center (NHRC) in San Diego as the Program Manager. NHRC developed a comprehensive strategic plan to meet DoD's stated objectives, and provides day-to-day direction of the DoD effort, including establishing an Initiative Steering Committee. The Committee meets semi-annually for progress updates from the Program Management Office to ensure that all efforts are consistent with Initiative objectives.

PRIMARY PREVENTION

- **Regional Specific Military-based Education:** Based on findings of the regional diversity of AIDS in Africa and through work with UNAIDS, regional research centers, and African militaries, DoD supports military-based education and training activities in select African countries. Moreover, these activities are integrated into *existing defense engagements* to the greatest extent possible. DoD is also available for complete HIV/AIDS prevention technical assistance for African militaries. The approach proceeds by stages:

  - assessment of HIV prevalence and risk behaviors
  - development or augmentation of a regional prevention plan
  - implementation through training and development of infrastructure
  - evaluation of the effect of prevention
  - refinement and incorporation into the military culture for enduring impact

  DoD builds on its unique tri-service military education programs developed to prevent alcohol abuse and STDs, as well as the region-specific HIV prevention work by NGOs and USAID. Programs will be coordinated with similar U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) and the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) activities to the fullest extent practical. This project is expected to contribute to long-term and sustained HIV prevention in Africa.

- **Enhanced military education of African UN Peacekeeper forces.** African military personnel deployed far from their home bases for long periods in conjunction with UN peacekeeping activities may experience a different HIV risk profile than soldiers remaining at home. HIV prevention modules have been developed for training UN peacekeepers pre-deployment and UN Department of Peacekeeping Operations (UNDPKO) will continue its work in activities related to HIV/STD prevention.

ACTIVITY UPDATE

- DoD has conducted completed assessments in South Africa, Botswana, Lesotho, Ethiopia, Angola, Nigeria, Eritrea, Kenya, Benin, Zambia, and Ghana. Completed workplans have been received from ten of these countries. Highlights are provided below.

  - DoD has been working closely with the South African Military Health Service (SAMHS) in the development of a large-scale HIV/AIDS prevention program for their military members, beginning with the Master Trainer Course training in mid-November 2000. The Initiative is currently underwriting provincial training programs (peer educator/counselors) and the Medical Health Service's Massive Awareness Campaign. The South African Program will also include Lesotho and Swaziland.

  - In Ethiopia, the Initiative will assist the Ethiopian armed forces in training demobilized soldiers as community based peer educators/counselors, the first such program of its kind anywhere. DoD sent a team of curriculum and peer education experts to Addis Ababa in June 2001 to work with Ethiopian military medicine representatives in the development of appropriate curriculum materials for this demobilization campaign. Many innovative ideas were expressed by the Ethiopians and will be included in the plan for resource requirements, including the use of drama and radio serial programs as HIV/AIDS prevention education tools.

  - In Angola, a completed workplan was received, translated from Portugese, and resource requirements analyzed. DoD has provided the Angolan Armed Forces (FAA) several shipments of audio/visual and computer equipment that was requested in support of their troop training for HIV/AIDS prevention, via the U.S. Embassy in Luanda.

  - An HIV/AIDS prevention program proposal have been received from the military medicine representatives in Botswana. Funding of the BDF's plan has commenced in coordination with that country's DAO and ODC, and in cooperation with CDC efforts in-country.

  - The military in Benin has submitted an HIV/AIDS prevention plan which has been analyzed. Funding has been allocated and will be resourced via the local USAID mission to the military medicine representatives.

  - The Ghana Police Force submitted a proposal for the expansion of their impressive HIV/AIDS peer education training program. Funds have been allocated to support this proposal and will be transferred to Ghana.

- In June 2001, a DoD team met with USG and military medicine representatives from the Kenyan DoD (KDOD). A complete workplan and budget was proposed, with the CDC acting as a nearly equal partner for the funding of the prevention plan in Kenya's military forces. The US Army Medical Research Unit (MRU) will act as an intermediary source for funds to be transferred to the Kenyans. Resourcing of the KDOD plan will begin immediately.

- In August 01, a needs assessment team visited Uganda in coordiation with the DAO, to meet with military medicine representatives and offer assistance. Uganda HIV/AIDS representatives will be submitting a plan in the future.

- The Eritrean Defense Force has submitted a plan for HIV/AIDS prevention in their soldiers. Resources have been allocated, and the Initiative Office is working closely with the SAO in Asmara to commence funding. A needs assessment team will visit Eritrea in Sept 01 to coordinate logisitics.

- A needs assessment team will visit Namibia in Sept 01, in coordination with the DAO, to meet with the military medicine representatives there and offer assistance to begin funding.

- The Initiative is fully integrated into the CDC and USAID's expanded efforts for HIV/AIDS efforts in Africa.

- Related activities with no direct involvement of the DoD Initiative office:

  - The Africa Center for Strategic Studies (ACSS—a DoD forum for African civilian and military leaders) has incorporated HIV prevention into its curricula, addressing the issue in each of its regional seminars. A health risk security seminar focusing on HIV and other infectious diseases will take place in March 2002.

  - Through the International Health Resources Management (IHRM) program, an Extended International Military Education and Training (EIMET) program, HIV/AIDS infrastructure management and sustainment courses will be offered to African militaries beginning 4th quarter 2001.

FUTURE ACTIVITES

- DoD is undertaking a policy initiative to seek ways of collaborating with the European Union on HIV related training programs for African Uniformed Services.

- A EUCOM/CENTCOM integrated engagement activity campaign. HIV training modules will part of engagement activities overseen by the unified command CINCs.

- Countries identified for assessment in FY02 are: Senegal, Mali, Malawi, Zimbabwe, Mozambique.

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