



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

USAFRICOM Annual Malaria Symposium
Patch Barracks; Stuttgart, Germany
19-21 April 2011

The United States Africa Command (USAFRICOM), in observance of World Malaria Day, sponsored their first annual AFRICOM Surgeon General's Malaria Symposium in April 2011 with support from the Armed Forces Health Surveillance Center and the Center for Disaster and Humanitarian Assistance Medicine. The goal of this 2.5 day multi-lateral conference was to strengthen strategic relationships and share priorities, interagency communication, and multilateral collaboration among civilian and military members within Africa, and between African countries and international partners.

The conference objectives included:

- Share African nations' malaria surveillance programs
- Discuss the threats to security and stability posed by malaria
- Share successful programs and efforts in malaria prevention, surveillance, and response
- Promote interagency collaboration, cooperation and communication in malaria control policy efforts

The conference was attended by 55 individuals including senior military members from 6 African countries that participate in the President's Malaria Initiative (PMI; Benin, Ghana, Kenya, Senegal, Tanzania and Uganda). USAFRICOM, along with their component commands, the Walter Reed Army Institute of Research, Naval Medical Research Unit No. 3, and United States Army Medical Research Unit-Kenya were the primary DOD delegates. Also in attendance were representatives from interagency partners to include United States Agency for International Development, Defense HIV/AIDS Prevention Program and various European public health colleagues.

The 2.5-day agenda featured a series of presentations by African partner nation representatives, interagency liaisons, and subject matter experts with two panel discussions capping each half-day session. The conference was built around half-day themes including: status of malaria and current surveillance efforts on the African continent; malaria's impact on military populations, security, and stability; eradication and prevention efforts; and diagnostics and treatment. The second day specifically highlighted the successes and challenges each African nation has experienced in addressing malaria. The final morning included bilateral conversations between African nation guests and relevant USAFRICOM and DOD representatives addressing their level of interest and commitment in future disease surveillance and malaria projects.

Common issues identified included: 1) Malaria consumes a large part of the very limited healthcare resources that African military health systems receive. Although a large proportion of malaria care rendered by military healthcare facilities is provided to civilians—including military dependents—facilities do not qualify for PMI funding given the current regulations. 2) Deployed African military members are susceptible to new strains of malaria and are responsible for introducing local epidemics upon their return. Laboratory capabilities and disease surveillance systems in deployed and garrison settings are not able to effectively characterize and track these trends. Neither standardized reporting criteria nor electronic surveillance systems are commonly used. 3) Although malaria was the topic of this symposium, it was recognized that malarial efforts need to strengthen the entire healthcare system and not merely target a specific disease to the detriment of other public health efforts.

As a result of the workshop, African delegates expressed the desire to form regional steering groups that could discuss issues related to malaria and provide policy and surveillance recommendations to their military leadership and amongst African nations. Future USAFRICOM malaria efforts will include hosting their annual Malaria Symposium and supporting the creation of regional malaria task forces to address multi-lateral cooperative strategies.