



“Divided Horizons”

Twenty-first Secretary of Defense Strategic Policy Forum Examines U.S. National Interests in Nigeria

—EXERCISE SUMMARY—

May 15, 2007: Senior executive branch officials from the departments of Defense, State, Energy, Justice, and several others, including the National Intelligence Council and USAID, were joined by one Member of Congress for an in-depth discussion of how internal stability and electoral politics in Nigeria could affect U.S. energy security and interests in West Africa. Several participants commented that the scenario presented in *Divided Horizons* was especially “plausible and relevant.” Drawing on current events and numerous postulated security challenges, the SPF team delivered “an instructive, well-facilitated, and informative session,” according to another high-ranking government official.

This was the first execution of *Divided Horizons* and took place at the National Defense University in southwest Washington, D.C. The Honorable Ryan Henry, Principal Deputy Under Secretary of Defense for Policy, represented the Secretary of Defense and opened the exercise. He advised that Nigeria represented more than simply an energy supplier to the United States, acknowledging its influence on the stability of the West African region and the African continent as a whole.

Participants were asked to consider how the U.S. might respond to a posited rising tide of violence in Nigeria as fallout from April 2007 elections that generated widespread disenchantment and frustration with both the electoral process itself and the authority of the central government. As the notional scenario unfolded, various Western interests came under direct attack across the country, focusing the need for U.S. and international intervention. Nigeria currently represents the U.S.’s fourth largest source of crude oil, and its population surpasses that of any other African country.



Amb. William Bellamy, Senior Vice President, NDU, greets participants to discuss security implications of instability in Nigeria.

The Honorable Robert Wilkie, Assistant Secretary of Defense for Legislative Affairs, was the senior DoD official participating in the exercise. He closed the day's events, noting that the participants had touched on several important nuances specific to Nigeria, as well as the broader challenges posed by sub-Saharan Africa. Mr. Wilkie articulated the room's general conclusion that whatever impression the participants previously held about Nigeria, they were leaving with a true sense of the deep complexities posed by this nation's role in world affairs.

SPF's crisis-simulation exercises, an initiative of the Office of the Secretary of Defense, are designed to provide senior government officials with insights into the complex world of policymaking in the current global security environment. For further information, please contact Col Chris Goggins, USAF, Director SPF, at (202) 685-4827 or by e-mail at gogginsc@ndu.edu; or Dr. Margaret McCown at (202) 685-2855 or mccownm@ndu.edu.

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Amb. Johnnie Carson, National Intelligence Officer for Africa, National Intelligence Council, weighs possible U.S. options to address a hypothetical crisis.