



Understanding the African Standby Force, rapid deployment and Amani Africa II

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Frequently asked questions:

African Standby Force

1. What is the African Standby Force (ASF)?
 - It is a multi-disciplinary, continental peacekeeping force comprised of military, police and civilian components, which are on standby in their regions of origin and available to the African Union for deployment in times of crisis.
 - The ASF has been in development since May 2003, when the AU adopted the Policy Framework for the Establishment of the African Standby Force and the Military Staff Committee.
2. Where does the ASF fit into the overarching AU structures?
 - The ASF is one element of the African Peace and Security Architecture (APSA). The other four elements are: the Peace and Security Council; Panel of the Wise; Continental Early Warning System, and the African Union Peace Fund.
3. What is the ASF's rapid deployment capability (RDC)?
 - This is the rapid response force that can be deployed anywhere on the continent within 14 days in emergencies such as cases of war crimes, genocide and gross human rights abuses.
 - The RDC is made up of 2 500 personnel per regional economic community/regional mechanism (REC/RM).
4. What is the mandate of the ASF?

The functions of the ASF include:

 - Intervening to restore peace and security
 - Preventative deployment to prevent crises from escalating, stop the spread of violent conflict, or stem the resurgence of violence
 - Conducting, observing and monitoring peacekeeping missions and support operations
 - Providing humanitarian assistance in conflict areas
5. When is the ASF expected to be operational?
 - January 2016
6. What is the current ASF structure?
 - The current ASF structure is made up of 25 000 personnel: five regional, multidimensional (military, police and civilian) brigades of 5 000 personnel each. The brigades remain on standby in their host country until deployment.
 - These brigades are based on three regional economic communities (RECs) and two regional mechanisms (RMs), namely the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS), the South African Development Community (SADC), the Eastern African Standby Force (EASF) and the North African Regional Capability (NARC).

- 7. In which cases, and how, would the ASF be deployed?**
- The ASF will be able to intervene in cases of war crimes, genocide or crimes against humanity if an AU member state requests assistance or if the AU itself considers the situation serious enough.
 - RECs/RMs are largely responsible for generating the capabilities required for an operation. The REC/RM and the AU share deployment and management responsibilities.
 - Deployments will start as regional operations before turning into larger, AU operations.
- 8. How will the ASF be funded?**
- Funding arrangements are still to be finalised. In line with the goal for Africa to play a more prominent role in the continent's peace operations, it is expected that the AU will contribute 25% of the funding for the ASF. The ASF will remain reliant on external (UN, EU and bilateral) support for 75% of funding.
 - Competing domestic interests might complicate member state funding, as states might rather allocate such funds in combating local threats.
- 9. What potential challenges might hinder the rapid deployment of the ASF?**
- Funding
 - Slow decision making, whether at member state REC/RM, AU or UN level
 - Lack of equipment and personnel
 - Lack of training of contingents
 - Potential delays given that approval might be sought from the EU and UNSC prior to deployment for the sake of international legitimacy
 - A lack of political will
 - Limited logistics and airlift capacity. (This is why an AU continental logistics base, to be established in Douala, Cameroon, is so important.)
 - Lack of solid intelligence gathering
 - Unevenness of REC/RM ability or pledged contributions
- 10. Where will the AU's continental logistics base be located?**
- The Cameroonian city of Douala is set to host the logistics base. Equipment will be stored here, however, the ultimate power remains at the AU headquarters in Addis Ababa.
- 11. Does Africa have the troops and experience needed for the ASF to be successful?**
- In the past decade, AU has already deployed peace support operations to 11 countries. African countries are also major contributors to UN peace operations.
 - Of all the operations deployed to date, those in Mali and the Central African Republic most closely resembled the ASF model, where the AU worked with a region (ECOWAS and ECCAS respectively) to plan and deploy an operation.
 - Africa contributes the majority of troops used in UN peacekeeping missions. In 2013, about 35 000 African peacekeepers had participated in UN missions.

- The number of planned ASF troops (five regional brigades of 5 000 troops each) has therefore already been achieved.

African Capacity for Immediate Response to Crises

12. What is the African Capacity for Immediate Response to Crises (ACIRC)?

- ACIRC was established in 2013 to provide the continent with a rapid deployment capability ahead of ASF's deadline to become operational by 2015. It can therefore be described as a stopgap measure.
- ACIRC will be merged into the ASF's Rapid Deployment Capability.

13. Has ACIRC been deployed before?

- No.

14. How do the ASF and ACIRC relate to one another?

- ACIRC and the ASF have similar aims but differ with regard to funding, mandate and how they would deploy.
- The activities of the ASF, once functional, will be guided by its mandate, which focuses on conflict prevention and peacebuilding. The ACIRC model, on the other hand, is based on experiences such as in the CAR and Mali and therefore allows for peace *enforcement*.
- ACIRC works directly through the AU, whereas the ASF works through regional economic communities.
- ACIRC is self-funded and based on the voluntary participation of member states, whereas the ASF requires significant AU funding and must coordinate large numbers of member states.
- ACIRC is deployed at the behest of a lead country with AU approval, whereas the ASF is deployed by the AU itself with approval from regional economic communities. This makes ACIRC potentially more agile, but with less authority.
- Whether, and how, the ASF and ACIRC should merge must be clarified following the conclusion of the Amani Africa II field exercise.

Amani Africa II

15. What is Amani Africa II?

- The Amani Africa II *field training exercise* at the SA Army Combat Training Centre in Lohatla, South Africa from 18 October – 5 November 2015 is aimed at testing the operational readiness of the ASF and its Rapid Deployment Capability. The field exercise is part of a process and not an end in itself.
- The first phase of the field exercise focuses on rapid deployment. In the second phase, participants will test the deployment of a multi-dimensional PSO.

- The Amani Africa II *cycle* is a collaboration between the AU and EU whereby, as part of the ongoing strategic partnership between the two organisations, training and exercises will test the decision-making structures, management and deployment of the African Standby Force (ASF) at the continental level.
- The Amani Africa II cycle is mainly funded through the EU's African Peace Facility.

16. Who is participating in the Amani Africa II field exercise?

- Some 5 400 representatives from defence and police forces of member states.
- The major contributors are Angola, Botswana, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Lesotho, Malawi, Mozambique, Namibia, South Africa, Swaziland Zambia and Zimbabwe.
- Other contributing countries will be Algeria, Burundi, Egypt, Ethiopia, Gambia, Ghana, Kenya, Nigeria, Rwanda and Uganda.

17. What are the envisaged outcomes of Amani Africa II field exercise?

- Critical gaps and challenges in the operational readiness of the ASF must be identified.
- Clarity must be reached on how the ASF and ACIRC can be integrated.
- The command, control and communication required on the tactical, operational and strategic levels will be evaluated, and the spotlight must be turned to whether best practices had been applied, and whether the outcomes are in line with standardised operational procedures.

Analysis from the ISS

[African Standby Force: how the AU can get it right](#)

Author: Annette Leijenaar, Division Head, Conflict Management and Peacebuilding, ISS
Published in *ISS Today*: 30 October 2015

[The African Standby Force needs resources, resources, resources](#)

ISS PSC Report - Published 29 October 2015

[The African Standby Force beyond 2015: ideals versus realities](#)

Authors: Dr Walter Lotze, Senior Researcher, Center for International Peace Operations (ZIF), Berlin and Annette Leijenaar, Division Head, Conflict Management and Peacebuilding, ISS
Published in *ISS Today*: 14 September 2015

[Standing by or standing up: is the African Standby Force nearly ready for action?](#)

Author: Peter Fabricius, ISS Consultant
Published in *ISS Today*: 23 July 2015

[Will ACIRC survive the AU summit?](#)

ISS PSC Report - Published 10 June 2015

[Africa can solve its own problems with proper planning and full implementation of the African Standby Force](#)

Author: Annette Leijenaar, Division Head, Conflict Management and Peacebuilding, ISS
Published in *ISS Today*: 21 January 2014

[Does the unwieldy label of the African Capacity for Immediate Response to Crises conceal a real determination to act?](#)

Author: Peter Fabricius, ISS Consultant
Published in *ISS Today*: 7 November 2013

[A stitch in time would have saved nine: operationalising the African Standby Force](#)

Author: Festus Aboagye
Published: 34 September 2012

Acronyms

AU	African Union
AU PSC	African Union Peace and Security Council
ACIRC	African Capacity for Immediate Response to Crises
APSA	African Peace and Security Architecture
ASF	African Standby Force
CAR	Central African Republic
CTC	(South African Army) Combat Training Centre
EASF	Eastern African Standby Force
ECCAS	Economic Community of Central African States
ECOWAS	Economic Community of West African States
EU	European Union
PSO	peace support operation
RDC	Rapid Deployment Capability
REC	regional economic community
RM	regional mechanism
SA	South Africa
SADC	Southern African Development Community
NARC	North African Regional Capability
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
UN	United Nations
UNSC	United Nations Security Council

Images

A selection of [high-res images](#) from the Amani II field exercise is [available free of charge](#) to our media partners. Email jcochrane@issafrica.org.



Get in touch

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