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**Cover Story**  
**Obama Visits Africa's "Oil Gulf"**  
**By Emira Woods**  
**BlackCommentator.com Editorial Board**

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President Barrack Obama makes his historic visit to Africa. Born of a Kenyan economist father, Obama will go not to his ancestral lands but to Ghana, Africa's newest oil State.

Oil was discovered in Ghana just in 2007. A wide swath of the Atlantic's Western shores, the area stretching from Morocco to Angola is becoming Africa's "Oil Gulf". Oil-producing countries in Africa, including those in the oil-rich Gulf of Guinea, now provide [24% of U.S. oil imports](#). Africa has outstripped the Middle East as an oil supplier to America. Increasingly, Africa's oil is being produced offshore.

Off Ghana's deep Atlantic shores, the Texas-based, [Kosmos Energy](#) already controls the Jubilee Fields, one of the largest oil finds in West Africa in the past decade, which is predicted to hold 1.2 billion barrels of oil. In May, 2009 Kosmos began to draw bids for shares of its stake in the oil-rich fields. Global energy players - Chevron Corp, Exxon Mobil, Royal Dutch Shell, China National Offshore Oil Company, and British Petroleum - all with a focused eye on Africa, and a bloodied record on the continent are beginning to circle like vultures. After all, the deadline for Kosmos Energy Bids has been set for July 17, a week after Obama's visit to Ghana.

With heightened interest in Africa's oil, the U.S. has moved to strengthen its military (and naval) presence in Africa's "Oil Gulf". In October 2008, the U.S. [Africa Command](#) was officially established. Transplanting a framework from the Middle East, U.S. military assets would be aimed at securing Africa's oil, and seeking so-called "terrorists". The U.S. Africa Command claims to "help Africans help themselves". The Command lists humanitarian missions like dental clinics, building of schools, wells, etc. What is more opaque is the intent to train and arm proxy militaries that can secure and sustain the ever-present fix for the United States' addiction to fossil fuels.

Ghanaian human rights and social justice activists are expressing concerns that President Obama's high profile visit may be a fig leaf for covert plans to further U.S.

military expansion in Africa and move the U.S. Africa Command from its current site in Stuttgart to an Africa base.

Ghanaians and other Africans are clamoring for a new direction in U.S. Africa policy, one based in mutual interests and mutual respect.

Can the Obama administration curb the thrust towards a militarized foreign policy by reversing the advance of AFRICOM and U.S. military expansion in Africa?

More importantly, can the Obama administration transfer its rhetorical commitment to a green economy into concrete policies that end our addiction to oil?

The long term impact of Obama's trip to Ghana may well be viewed through the lens of these critical questions.

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**The BlackCommentator Readers' Corner Blog**

**BlackCommentator** Editorial Board member Emira Woods is the co-director of [Foreign Policy In Focus](#) at the [Institute for Policy Studies](#) in Washington, DC. She was born in Liberia. Ezekiel Pajibo is executive director of the Liberia-Based Center for Democratic Empowerment. [Click here](#) to contact Ms. Woods.

### **Additional Related Reading**

*In the weeks leading up to President Obama's historic visit to Ghana, a coalition of civil society groups and organizations around the world came together to formulate a collective vision of a new United States engagement with Africa. Please find below a letter detailing this vision that has been sent to President Obama. This letter has been endorsed by 31 leading Africa advocacy organizations as well more than 200 individuals. Click [here](#) to read the letter.*

Click [here](#) to read "What Obama Should Say in Ghana" by [Foreign Policy In Focus](#) contributor Charles Abugre is a Ghanaian economist and the policy director of Christian Aid. The views expressed in this article should not be attributed to Christian Aid.

Click [here](#) to read "Straight Talk: Revealing the Real U.S.-Africa Policy" by Gerald LeMelle, a contributor to [Foreign Policy In Focus](#) and executive director of [Africa Action](#).

Click [here](#) to read "Niger Delta Standoff" by Kia Mistilis, a contributor to [Foreign Policy In Focus](#) and an independent journalist and photographer based in San Francisco. She has documented places as diverse as New York City and the villages of East Timor.

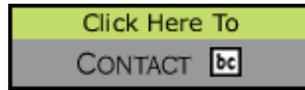
Click [here](#) to read the MEDIA BRIEFING BOOKLET On the occasion of President Barack Obama's visit to Ghana 7/10/2009.

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