

AFRI ... UM EUROAFRICOM

Scout prime has been tracking something I've been watching, too. The new AfriCom military command? Well, the entire continent of Africa has told us, "no, thanks."

The Pentagon's plan to create a US military command based in Africa have hit a wall of hostility from governments in the region reluctant to associate themselves with the Bush administration's "war on terror" and fearful of American intervention.

A US delegation led by Ryan Henry, principal deputy under-secretary of defence for policy, returned to Washington last week with little to show for consultations with defence and foreign ministry officials in Algeria, Morocco, Libya, Egypt, Djibouti and with the African Union (AU). An earlier round of consultations with sub-Saharan countries on providing secure facilities and local back-up for the new command, to be known as Africom and due to be operational by September next year, was similarly inconclusive.

The Libyan and Algerian governments reportedly told Mr Henry that they would play no part in hosting Africom. Despite recently improved relations with the US, both said they would urge their neighbours not to do so, either. Even Morocco, considered Washington's closest north African ally, indicated it did not welcome a permanent military presence on its soil.

"We've got a big image problem down there," a state department official admitted. "Public opinion is really against getting into bed with

theUS. They just don't trust the US."

The article cites public opinion and the desire to avoid building obvious terrorist targets in their countries. But I suspect two more things are at work, too. We're not going to establish an AfriCom headquarters without negotiating an agreement with the host country that gives our soldiers some immunity from local law enforcement, gives us a big financial bonus for establishing the headquarters, and a whole bunch of other goodies. (Read Chalmers Johnson's *Nemesis* if you're interested—here's a taste.) Once upon a time, such an arrangement was a good acceptable deal for the host country because, well, the US was the uncontested hegemon of the world.

But now, particularly in Africa (where Hu Jintao has been very busy making friends in recent years), that's no longer true. So I suspect that, when faced with the opportunity to cede a good deal of sovereignty so the US' cowboys can come in and push local folks around, that doesn't look like such a great deal anymore.