

US Tightens Africa Support Over Human Rights

August 8, 2025

— Categories: Human Rights



Download IPFS

In a decisive shift in foreign policy, the United States is moving to condition military and financial assistance to African nations on their alignment with American strategic, economic, and human rights interests. On August 1, Senator Jim Risch, ranking member of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, introduced four amendments to the 2026 National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) that seek to redefine the terms of US engagement across the African continent.

At the heart of this shift is Amendment 3628, which mandates a full review of Kenya's status as a Major Non-NATO Ally (MNNA). This designation, while symbolic, grants substantial defence privileges. Under the amendment, the President must provide Congress with an assessment of whether Kenya's defence and foreign policies continue to support US national security objectives. Concerns have grown in Washington over Nairobi's increasing ties with China and Russia, raising questions about the future of its strategic relationship with the United States.

Risch's move underscores growing unease within Congress over African states engaging in multipolar diplomacy that may dilute their commitments to US partnerships. The review would evaluate Kenya's recent defence deals, voting alignment at the United Nations, and military cooperation with US forces, signalling a potential recalibration of Washington's relationship with Nairobi.

Another key proposal, Amendment 362, targets Ghana, focusing not on its military policies but on its economic practices. The amendment would prohibit the United States from supporting Ghana's access to International Monetary Fund (IMF) programmes until it settles longstanding commercial debts owed to American companies. This places the financial interests of US firms at the forefront of diplomatic engagement, tying multilateral economic support to Ghana's willingness to fulfil its international obligations.

Ghana is currently undergoing a complex IMF-backed economic recovery effort following years of fiscal strain. Risch's measure, if enacted, would create a significant new hurdle for Ghana by linking IMF support to the resolution of private sector claims, a shift that could influence how other African nations handle commercial disputes with US entities.

Amendment 3626 proposes a formal assessment of whether the M23 rebel group in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) and Sudan's Rapid Support Forces (RSF) should be designated as Foreign Terrorist Organizations (FTOs). The RSF has been implicated in serious human rights violations during Sudan's ongoing conflict, while M23, now operating as a coordinated militia under the AFC-M23 banner, has significantly expanded its territorial and tactical capabilities across eastern DRC.

Since late 2024, AFC-M23 has launched multiple offensives, seized control of several major towns including Goma and Bukavu, and issued public statements claiming responsibility for attacks on civilian populations and administrative centres. These activities, according to the United States Code, fall within the legal definition of terrorism as

“premeditated, politically motivated violence against noncombatant targets by subnational groups.”

The proposed designation would restrict the groups’ access to international funding and send a clear diplomatic signal discouraging regional powers from negotiating with or harbouring them. Risch argues that the current US approach fails to reflect the scale and organisation of these groups, both of which now resemble hybrid military-political formations with strategic goals and armed capabilities. The Fourth Amendment seeks to limit US taxpayer funding for African Union-led peacekeeping efforts in Somalia. The AUSSOM Funding Restriction Act of 2025, also introduced by Senators Ted Cruz and Rick Scott, would block United States Assessed Contributions to the United Nations that are used to support the African Union Support and Stabilisation Mission in Somalia (AUSSOM). The measure responds to growing Congressional dissatisfaction over the AU’s perceived failure to meet transparency and effectiveness benchmarks required by the US government.

Under the amendment, funding will only resume if the State Department certifies that the AU’s operations do not support anti-American or anti-democratic agendas. Lawmakers backing the amendment contend that current funding models lack adequate safeguards and fail to uphold the expectations of US taxpayers. They are calling for increased accountability, alternative funding mechanisms, and more robust oversight of peace operations funded through multilateral organisations.

Taken together, the amendments mark a significant turn in US–Africa relations. The message to African leaders is unambiguous: future access to US defence cooperation, economic support, and counterterrorism partnerships will depend on demonstrated alignment with American security priorities, protection of human rights, and respect for commercial obligations.

The shift also reflects broader concerns in Washington about global competition, fiscal responsibility, and the use of foreign aid to advance strategic outcomes. While these changes stop short of ending US support, they signal a move toward conditional engagement, one that places increased responsibility on recipient governments to uphold shared values and interests.