

From the Latent to the Manifest: US Strategic Interests in the Gulf of Guinea

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ABSTRACT Until recently, Africa and indeed the Gulf of Guinea was not central to the United States' foreign policy objectives. However, events in the Persian Gulf (most of the world's largest oil reserves and the largest supplies of the US energy needs) corroborated by the catastrophe of September 11, 2001, necessitated a re-appraisal of Washington's policy towards the sub-region. Given that the Gulf of Guinea already supplies about 17 percent of US energy needs, the need to consolidate her presence in the sub-region became imperative. This paper traces the evolution of US presence in the Gulf of Guinea against the backdrop of the quest for the energy security. It also examines the impact of the competition between the US and her closest rivals in the region and its grave security concerns. Finally, the paper suggests that collaborative effort by the stakeholders in the sub-region is the best way to mitigate the development challenges of the area.