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11 NATIONS JOIN U.S.-BACKED FORCE Eleven East African nations have agreed to set up an American-backed regional mechanism to respond to disasters and terrorist attacks, Gen. John P. Abizaid, the commander of American forces in the Persian Gulf, said at a meeting in Ethiopia of representatives from the 11 countries: Burundi, Congo, Djibouti, Egypt, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Kenya, Rwanda, Seychelles, Tanzania and Uganda. Details were sketchy, but General Abizaid said, "We know that we can only defeat terrorism collectively." American officials say Al Qaeda is active in East Africa. (AP)