

MEMORANDUM

THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

(23806)

~~SECRET~~

INFORMATION

January 20, 1971

MEMORANDUM FOR THE PRESIDENT

FROM: HENRY A. KISSINGER *HK*

THE PRESIDENT HAS SEEN *JK*

SUBJECT: Follow Up on Your Meeting with Haile Selassie

After your October 25 meeting with Haile Selassie you directed Marshall Wright of my staff to give you an assessment of the Emperor's claim that his security situation has deteriorated significantly in the past several years.

The Emperor's assertions were correct. Items contributing to the worsening security situation are:

-- In 1969 leftist and pro-Russian military groups seized power in both the Sudan and Somalia, both of which countries have an unresolved territorial dispute with Ethiopia.

-- The Russians are the sole arms and military assistance suppliers to the Sudan and Somali military forces.

-- The militant Arab states have sharply increased their assistance to the Eritrean Liberation Front, a Muslim group which aims at the independence of a substantial part of the Ethiopian Empire. As a result, ELF activities have increased dramatically and caused the Ethiopian Government to declare martial law throughout the province of Eritrea.

-- The Chinese Communists are building the 1,200 mile Tanzam Railroad through Tanzania and Zambia and the Chicombs have now undertaken to equip and train the Tanzanian armed forces.

-- In short, communist influence appears markedly on the rise among the Emperor's immediate and unfriendly neighbors as well as more widely in East Asia.

~~SECRET~~

DECLASSIFIED
PA/HO Department of State
E.O. 12958, as amended
April 21, 2005

~~SECRET~~

2

On the other hand, there are other factors which substantially reduce the threat to Ethiopian security. Neither Somalia nor the Sudan is capable of mounting a sustained attack against Ethiopia. Despite the relative increase in the strength of her neighbors, Ethiopia continues to have by far the strongest and most effective military establishment in the area.

We believe the Emperor fears that the U.S. intends to terminate our military assistance program for Ethiopia. That fear, we believe, rather than any immediate concern with his security situation, was the motivation behind his presentation to you. We have, therefore, taken two steps to meet his concern. First, we have sent a message from you expressing your understanding for his concern with his security situation and assuring him that we intend to continue a significant military assistance program in the coming years. The message also informs him that you have instructed our military mission in Addis Ababa to make itself available for discussions to identify the priorities for the continuing program. Secondly, we have restored \$1 million to the Ethiopian MAP program for 1972 which had earlier been cut out by OMB.

A more detailed assessment of the Ethiopian security situation and of our response to the Emperor's concern is found attached at Tab A.

DECLASSIFIED
PA/HO Department of State
E.O. 12958, as amended
April 21, 2005

~~SECRET~~

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

~~SECRET~~INFORMATION

MEMORANDUM FOR THE PRESIDENT

FROM: Henry A. Kissinger

SUBJECT: Threat to Ethiopian Security

At his October 25 meeting with you, Haile Selassie renewed his 1969 request for more military assistance and asserted that the Ethiopian security situation has deteriorated in the last several years. You directed that we give you an assessment of the validity of his assertion.

The Emperor is correct. The past two years have brought a clear deterioration in the overall political situation in the East Africa area, and there has been a sharp increase in the military hardware available to hostile neighboring states. Factors contributing to this assessment are:

-- In 1968, Sudan and the USSR signed a \$60 million arms agreement. Deliveries thus far have included 24 Mig 21 jet fighters, 55 tanks, and a number of transport aircraft.

-- In May 1969, a leftist military group seized power in the Sudan. The group is hostile to Ethiopia's friendship with Israel and provides assistance to Moslem separatists in Ethiopia.

-- In October 1969, the Soviet trained and equipped Somali Army seized power and Somali policy since that time has been increasingly pro-Soviet and anti-American. The ruling group is erratic and highly nationalistic, characteristics of significance in view of the longstanding Somali claims to a portion of Ethiopia.

-- Since 1963, the Somalis have received about \$40 million of Soviet military equipment and there are credible rumors of an enlarged program of assistance.

-- The Eritrean Liberation Front, a Muslim rebel group seeking the independence of Ethiopia's northern-most province, has been reinvigorated in the last year by assistance from radical Arab states. The

DECLASSIFIED
PA/HO Department of State
E.O. 12958, as amended
April 21, 2005

~~SECRET~~

current level of ELF terrorism, although still no threat to overall Ethiopian control, is more intense and more widespread than at any time in recent years.

-- The Chinese Communists have lent Tanzania and Zambia over \$400 million to build a 1200 mile rail link from Zambia to the coast, and, in January 1970, undertook to arm and train the Tanzanian armed forces.

-- In March 1968, the Soviets began to project their naval presence into the Indian Ocean. Since then, there have been 49 naval visits to 24 ports in 16 countries.

Factors Which Lessen the Threat to Ethiopian Security

Taken in isolation, the facts cited above portray an excessive picture of the security threat which Ethiopia now faces. There are other factors which substantially reduce the short-run threat to Ethiopia.

-- The Sudanese Government is faced with a serious revolutionary movement in the South which substantially reduces both the inclination and ability of the Sudanese Government to harm Ethiopia.

-- According to our best intelligence, both the Sudanese and Somali forces are having severe difficulties in absorbing the impressive amounts of Soviet military equipment which they have received. It is not at all likely within the next several years at least, that either will attain a level of quality comparable to that of Ethiopian military forces.

-- Even were they to do so, neither country has the capacity to support sustained combat operations against Ethiopia.

-- Despite the relative deterioration of Ethiopia's position, Ethiopian forces continue to be superior in both numbers and quality to that of any credible combination of forces in the area.

Overall Assessment of Ethiopia's Security Position

Ethiopia exists in an area of congenital tension and instability. Long-standing border disputes, irredentist political movements, and active insurgency movements compound the situation. Recent political developments in the area are distinctly unfavorable in terms of Ethiopia's long

~~SECRET~~

3

range security. The threat, however, is more potential than immediate, and Ethiopia's military strength is adequate to deal with any military attack which can be deemed at all likely. To a certain extent, the Ethiopian attempt to maintain an overwhelming military superiority as compared to its potential enemies is self-defeating, for Ethiopian superiority engenders a large appetite on the part of Ethiopia's neighbors for Soviet military assistance. Yet the animosity and political trends of Ethiopia's neighbors is such that Ethiopia can hardly be expected to feel secure with anything less than clear military superiority.

What Do We Do About the Emperor's Request

I think there is a sharp distinction between what the Emperor says he wants and what, in fact, he really wants. He expresses his needs in terms of new agreements on force goals for the Ethiopian air force and navy, modernization, assistance with Ethiopian counter-insurgency problems and support for the Ethiopian militia. In all probability, however, his real fear is that we intend soon to terminate or drastically cut back the size of our military assistance program to Ethiopia.

From his point of view, this fear is altogether rational. Our military assistance program for the past 10 years has been keyed to the 1960 agreement to equip a 40,000 man Ethiopian Army. That program is all but completed. Although we in fact plan to continue a military assistance program comparable in size to those of recent years, the Ethiopians do not know this. Nor, in all probability, do they realize that on-going support, spare parts, and replacements for the existing Ethiopian force, necessarily involves a program of significant dimensions. Nor, for that matter, have we ever told them that we intend to continue on-going support for the force we have now equipped.

It is, therefore, altogether likely that for the past several years the Emperor and his Defense advisors have feared that we considered ourselves approaching the end of our commitment to Ethiopia for military assistance, and they have been anxious to establish a new basis for continuing the U.S. program.

We know, for instance, that the Emperor has been deeply concerned about the Nixon Doctrine and has on several occasions expressed the fear that it will mean a sharp cut-back in American assistance to its friends abroad (read Ethiopia). More significantly, we also know that the Emperor was extremely reassured by his meeting with you on October 25. In view of the fact that you were totally non-committal about his specific requests, the only way to account for that reassurance is your vigorous statement that

~~SECRET~~

DECLASSIFIED
PA/HO Department of State
E.O. 12958, as amended
April 21, 2005

~~SECRET~~

4

"we know who our friends are" and that our friends can count on our continuing support.

We have, therefore, sent a personal message to the Emperor keeping completely away from the specifics of his request for military equipment, but making it plain that we contemplate the continuation of a significant military assistance program to Ethiopia, and urging that Ethiopia's priority needs be worked out between our MAAG in Addis Ababa and the Ethiopian Ministry of Defense. This, I believe, will meet the Emperor's basic need, which is a firm reassurance that his country is not about to be cut adrift.

At the same time, we have instructed our Embassy in Addis Ababa to renew consultations as soon as possible with Ethiopian authorities to examine Ethiopian needs, and, to the maximum extent possible within prevailing fiscal guidelines, to incorporate those needs in the on-going military assistance program for Ethiopia.

Finally, we have restored a one million dollar cut made by OMB in the 1972 MAP for Ethiopia. This will keep our program at a steady level and permit us to respond to some of the Ethiopian desires for modernization.

We will thus have established with both the Ethiopians and our own bureaucracy the fact that Ethiopia continues to have a priority claim to military assistance funds available for Africa and that you wish, within the fiscal limitations of that program, to be as responsive as possible to Ethiopian needs for additional military assistance.

This is not, in fact, a new policy, but rather a confirmation at the Presidential level of what we are already doing. Military assistance to Ethiopia is seen clearly, by both the Ethiopians and ourselves, as payment for our major communications [redacted] station at Kagnev. While the Emperor lives, while we still have a need for Kagnev (a recent study deemed it essential for the next 5 years, at least), and while the general posture of the Ethiopian Government remains acceptable, it is hardly conceivable that we would terminate the MAP program to Ethiopia.

DECLASSIFIED
PA/HO Department of State
E.O. 12958, as amended
April 21, 2005