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DEPARTMENT OF STATE

BRIEFING MEMORANDUM

SW S/S 7501760

January 24, 1975

[redacted]

TO: P - Mr. Sisco

FROM: S/P - Winston Lord

Ethiopia

This is the conceptual paper on Ethiopia for which you asked after your meeting with INR, AF, and PM on January 15. It is a first cut at the problem, putting Ethiopia into a wider regional and strategic context and deliberately avoiding questions of nuts and bolts. It is unsatisfying in that it finds the situation so unpredictable, and that it recommends continuation of the current policy until the future falls more clearly into perspective. However, this may be as far as we can carry it intellectually in this first go-round. In any event, the analysis of our interests and the basic framework should provide a useful start for developing a new policy.

It might be useful for you to meet briefly with Hummel, Mulcahy, Hyland and me to discuss any desirable revisions and other next steps, possibly including a small meeting with the Secretary based on a revised paper.

Attachment:

Paper on Ethiopia

S/P:HJSpiro
x22576, 1/24/75

[redacted]
GDS

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E.O. 12958, as amended
May 4, 2006

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ETHIOPIA

Background 1

US Interests 2

Possible Future Scenarios 4

1. One Ethiopia...Harrassed 6
2. Eritrean Independence 7
3. Debilitation 7
4. Chaos and Collapse 7

American Strategies 8

1. Passivity 9
2. Support of the PMAC 10
3. Support of Eritrean Independence 11
4. Support of Mediation by Others 12
5. Direct US Mediation 13

Conclusions 14

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PA/HO Department of State
E.O. 12958, as amended
May 4, 2006

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BACKGROUND

American involvement in Ethiopia, from its beginning in World War II, had both a military and a largely symbolic focus: Kagnew and Haile Selassie. The Emperor has been deposed and Kagnew is being phased out, possibly to be closed down by the end of 1976. While the US generally supported the Emperor because of his historic stature and the responsible role he was playing in Africa and the world, US economic and military assistance -- $215,000,000 and $122,000,000 in the last decade -- was also predicated upon the need to pay the Emperor for continued base rights and the desirability of maintaining stability on the Horn. The Emperor tried to dissuade the US from reducing the base, in effect reversing the logic to argue that we had to keep Kagnew to maintain stability through him. If he could speak to us now, he might say, "I told you so: You phased out Kagnew; therefore I was overthrown." He would be wrong. His durability was more surprising than his ouster in 1974. In 1961, a student of African politcs wrote: "...It seemed unlikely that his old regime would survive himself if, indeed, it would last that long." US official and private aid to Ethiopia together with assistance provided by other countries, created tremendous tensions between the feudal realities of the Empire and the modern expectations which western training and other exposures engendered

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E.O. 12958, as amended
May 4, 2006

among the thin educated elite. These tensions were not always anticipated by proponents of aid who believed in "stable development," a contradiction in terms. American assistance, especially from the private sector, did not come to grips with these contradications.

CURRENT POLICY

We informed the Ethiopian Ambassador on December 23 that it was US policy to continue our friendly relations with Ethiopia and told him that the Department of Defense was prepared to continue the discussion of military assistance. When Foreign Minister Kifle returned to Washington, he assured us that the PMAC wished to continue friendly relations with the US. This wish was reiterated to our Chargé in Addis by the Chairman of the PMAC last week. We are being as responsive as possible within existing restrictions to Ethiopian requests for military assistance. At the same time, AF and AID were authorized on January 31 to approve Recovery and Rehabilitation agreements up to $4 million and to obligate funds up to a total of $1 million for approved on-going technical assistance projects.

Our Chargé in Addis made representations about the security of American personnel and installations there, and urged the PMAC to prevent the media from publishing anti-American propaganda. The evacuation of Americans, and also British and Canadian citizens, from Asmara began on February 4. The Embassy has also recommended early departure from Ethiopia of Peace Corps volunteers whose effectiveness is reduced and/or whose security is threatened. In Eritrea, we have been following a policy of watchful waiting, which includes passive contacts with intermediaries of the insurgents.

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E.O. 12958, as amended
May 4, 2006

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US INTERESTS

With the twin pillars of the old policy gone or going, we can now conceive a more broadly based strategy, which rests upon overlapping clusters of interests. In the future, the focus of US interests will not be in Ethiopia for its own sake, but for its locus. Our earlier policies gave the US virtually unlimited access to Ethiopia for a great variety of purposes. The Imperial Ethiopian Government was responsive to US requests and we were able to exert influence through the IEG in regional African affairs, the non-aligned group, and at the UN. Other states, including the USSR and the PRC, enjoyed a more restricted access for a narrower range of purposes; e.g., the Soviets built a port and oil refinery at Assab, and Ethiopian Airlines flies regularly to Peking.

While we cannot expect to regain our former wide influence and unlimited access, we should make strong efforts not to be seen publicly as losing this historic relation through a failure of US diplomacy. Beyond that,

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E.O. 12958, as amended
May 4, 2006

our primary objective could be formulated as retention of access commensurate with future needs. Those needs will be less than in the past in some respects, like the various functions of Kagnew, and may become greater in other respects, like Red Sea ports or Indian Ocean air patrols. (The Emperor denied us landing rights for this purpose -- P-3s -- because of what he regarded as an inadequate military aid quid.) Specific future needs are hard to forecast, because they will be shaped by relatively unpredictable events near-by, as in the Arabian Peninsula, Sudan, Kenya, and farther away, as on the Persian Gulf. Future needs will be shaped also by our ability to maintain or expand our access to facilities elsewhere, including Diego Garcia, Oman, and Kenya. A reasonable forecast can identify certain points to which we may need to have access in future contingencies; to which we will therefore want to maintain uninterrupted access; to which we will want to deny exclusive access to our strategic adversaries; and with the current or future controllers of which we will, therefore, have to maintain relations adequate to these purposes. These points include, in Eritrea,

-- Asmara, for its airfield and Kagnew until it is closed

-- the Red Sea ports of Massawa and Assab

-- the Straits of Bab-al-Mandab, as the Israeli egress from the Red Sea.

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E.O. 12958, as amended
May 4, 2006

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In Ethiopia proper, we may have an interest in

-- overflight rights, and possibly access to

-- Addis Ababa for its airfield.

In addition to access, the US also has an interest in the regional balance, involving

-- Soviet-supplied Somalia

-- the Arabian Peninsula and how an independent Eritrea would affect it

-- the Saudi-Iranian rivalry in case both get involved in the Horn

-- East African developments, especially in Kenya.

The importance of the interests of access can be assessed by asking how serious the situation would be if the US were denied access. In a non-war scenario, the US could probably make do without the Red Sea ports, used mainly for Navy shore leave, and the airfields, and without overflight rights. In war time, if the US needed the access, we might feel compelled to obtain it by military means. We could also explore the possibility with the apparently reluctant French of using their facilities at Djibouti as substitutes, on either a regular or an emergency basis.

POSSIBLE FUTURE SCENARIOS

Almost anything can happen in Ethiopia over the next couple of years, in its internal development, with respect

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E.O. 12958, as amended
May 4, 2006

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to Eritrea, Somalia, and in its relations with the rest of Africa, the Third World, and the superpowers. The new leadership is amorphous, uncohesive, and has been tortuously groping for coherent goals. Membership in the Provisional Military Administrative Council (PMAC) is shifting and has succeeded so far in remaining largely anonymous. This may be a reflection of the "African" ability to achieve consensus through palavering, which has elsewhere facilitated quick reconcilitation even after bloody civil war. On the other hand, Ethiopians are unlike most other Africans in that

-- they have a deep sense of history, due in part to Christianity and ancient elite literacy

-- they have for centuries assigned an important role to the military

-- they have a comparatively old sense of national unity transcending ethnic and religious differences

-- they have both old and new memories not only of being a regional power, but of playing a world role.

The new leadership does not yet know where it wants to go, but it has identified Ethiopia's main problems:

-- the Eritrean insurgency

-- Somali irredentism

-- abolition of feudalism

-- national development, poorly defined.

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E.O. 12958, as amended
May 4, 2006

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The PMAC's publication of its "ideology" of "Ethiopian Socialism" manifests another "African" trait, closer to Nyerere's African Socialism than to Marxism-Leninism-Maoism. In addition to Ethiopian peculiarities and more general African characteristics, the future of the Empire will also be shaped by the Organization of African Unity, which has consistently opposed secessions in the past and has a good record of settling intra-African disputes. Almost any Ethiopian leadership will try to keep the OAU's headquarters in Addis. Military rule by itself will not alienate the OAU from the PMAC: Other military regimes that fought secession subsequently rose to leadership in the OAU; e.g., Nigeria's Gowon. Nevertheless, Ethiopia's future seems less predictable today than Nigeria's in 1966, because of the greater involvement of extra-regional powers through assistance -- supplies, training, money, mediation -- to the various parties. Such interference has come from the US, the USSR, the PRC, Sudan, Syria, Iraq, Libya, the PDRY, Saudi Arabia, Lebanon, Israel, Italy, and France (which still controls Addis Ababa's only railroad port at Djibouti). The major possibilities are:

1. <u>One Ethiopia, Unified but Harrassed</u>

Outright Eritrean secession is prevented. The insurgency eventually subsides and Eritrea is granted a degree of provincial authonomy within some kind of

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E.O. 12958, as amended
May 4, 2006

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federal framework. The Somali-Ethiopian quarrel is suspended for the time being, but threats continue to be exchanged. Governments in Addis are unstable.

2. Eritrean Independence

By 1975 or '76, Ethiopian troops are expelled from Eritrea, which is admitted as a new member by the UN and the OAU. The new state may include parts of neighboring provinces, which participated in the insurgency. Eritrea received supplies from radical Arab sources. Saudi Arabia (and possibly Iran) helped both sides. The PMAC withdraws partly in order to reassert its control in the rest of the Empire and thereby to forestall a Somali attack. France gives assurances that Djibouti will remain open to Ethiopian commerce, and eventually Eritrea does the same for Massawa and Assab. The Eritrean regime is unstable.

3. Debilitation

None of the major issues is resolved. The Eritrean insurgency continues at a low level, as do others in other provinces. There is internecine fighting among the military. Foreign interference continues.

4. Chaos and Collapse

While the regime in Addis tries to put down the Eritrean and other insurgencies, the Somailis attack and grab the Ogaden. Internal unrest, violence, and instability continue. This might be exploited by the Sudan grabbing

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E.O. 12958, as amended
May 4, 2006

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other Ethiopian territory. This turmoil has its repercussions throughout the area stretching from the Sudan as far as Tanzania and Zambia. The OAU removes its headquarters from Addis and becomes passive in Africa and internationally.

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None of these skeletal scenarios seems probable in the precise form outlined. Some combination of components is more likely. As the future comes into better focus, the US can pursue several alternative strategies toward the objective of retaining access commensurate with needs and preventing a visible major diplomatic defeat.

ALTERNATIVE AMERICAN STRATEGIES

The ability of the US to exert direct influence on the outcome is severely limited. The easiest way for us to gain our primary objective of uninterrupted access to the ports and airfields would be preservation of the integrity of the Empire under a regime not hostile to the US. But even if the US were able to supply sufficient assistance -- military, technical, training, etc. -- to enable the PMAC to wipe out the insurgency (and to throttle the Somali threat), the friendliness of the PMAC or its successors toward the US would not be guaranteed. Gratitude is not a principle of

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E.O. 12958, as amended
May 4, 2006

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international relations. On the other hand, no matter what we do, the US will be accused by the eventual losers of having supported the winners, and the USG will be exposed to parallel criticism at home. If we continue current MAP and the PMAC loses, its survivors and other clients of the US are likely to blame their defeat on insufficient US support -- as some Ethiopians are already blaming the successive falls of the Emperor and General Aman on US refusal to grant them all the military assistance they requested. No matter whether we decide upon a strategy or not, we will incur all the liabilities of having devised one.

1. Passivity

We continue our present military assistance, possibly lowering but not raising its volume. We close Kagnew ahead of schedule only in the face of repeated attacks on Americans in Asmara. If approached by the ELF, we treat them the way we used to treat FRELIMO: in Washington, lunch with a Deputy Assistant Secretary, and abroad, meetings with an FSO-4. If Eritrean issues are raised at the UN, we use them to show that the Non-Aligned Countries have their own problems and should therefore not lecture the US. If Eritrea becomes a major issue dividing Arab from Black Africa, we exploit it to split the Third World. When pro-Eritrean governments

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PA/HO Department of State
E.O. 12958, as amended
May 4, 2006

REPRODUCED AT THE NATIONAL ARCHIVES

complain to us about our continued support of the PMAC, we explain it in terms to continued Soviet supplies to Somalia. We could formally urge the PMAC not to use US weapons in the counterinsurgency, just as we forbade Portugal the use of US-supplied arms in Africa.

If the harrassed Ethiopia of Scenario 1 eventuates, passivity may turn out to have been the best policy for purposes of retaining access. This would apply expecially in the unlikely event of a restoration. If the outcome is an Ethiopia more unified than harrassed, the government may consider the US stance to have been too wishy-washy. The various reconciled factions may be persuaded by other governments, which supported them and or contributed to the settlement(s) (Eritrean and Somali), that US passivity deserves to be repaid by denial of access.

2. Support of the PMAC

We could step up military assistance to the PMAC, overtly and/or covertly. (This could conceivably include the reintroduction of Israeli advisers, boats, etc.) If full PMAC control is the outcome, we will have backed the winner and will presumably enjoy better access than those who backed the losers or were active in unsuccessful mediation efforts. Nevertheless,

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E.O. 12958, as amended
May 4, 2006

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the PMAC could be radicalized despite US aid and a "second honeymoon" might be shortlived. In any event, since even the Emperor denied us use of airfields for P-3s, we should not expect too much in this regard from the PMAC. On the other hand, if Eritrean independence is the outcome, we would have backed the wrong horse and the new Eritrean government would almost certainly deny us access to the ports and Asmara, at least initially. Eritrea and Somalia might gang up against the French in Djibouti, cutting off Ethiopia's only remaining commercial access to the sea, so that Scenario 2 could degenerate into 3 or 4. Even before the issue is decided, US support of the PMAC might alienate the Eritreans to such an extent, that the ELF would systematically target US installations for the first time.

3. Support of Eritrean Independence

The US would signal its support of Eritrean independence on grounds of the principle of self-determination. We would stop military assistance to the PMAC, possibly justifying this with reference to its use of US-supplied arms in the fighting. We could be of help to the Eritreans, directly or indirectly, e.g., through the Saudis. As a result, the counterinsurgency effort would probably fail, and the PMAC might collapse.

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E.O. 12958, as amended
May 4, 2006

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The Somalis might grab the Ogaden and, because the US had helped make this possible, Somalia might thereafter be more even-handed in granting us access to its ports along with the Soviets and over the latter's objections. The US would retain access in Eritrea. We might be condemned for selling an old friend down the Red Sea, but if the PMAC committed more atrocities like the execution of the sixty leaders, such criticism would be muted. Post-independence reconciliation could be directed toward creating a loose Community of States on the Horn, including rump Ethiopia, Somalia, Eritrea, and possibly an independent ex-French Djibouti.

4. Support of Mediation by Others

The US would urge both parties to the Eritrean dispute to continue the reconciliation efforts to which they have variously committed themselves. We could offer assistance to others, like the Sudanese, who are already playing the role of mediators. We could offer development assistance designed to encourage Eritrean-Ethiopian reconciliation. We could urge Saudi Arabia, Iran, and/or others to make their assistance to the PMAC contingent on settlement of the Eritrean dispute. At the same time, we could also promote

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PA/HO Department of State
E.O. 12958, as amended
May 4, 2006

development assistance for the Ogaden that would benefit Ethiopia and Somalia equally. We could approach the Soviets and urge them to restrain the Somalis in return for our inducing suitable concessions from the Ethiopians.

If we follow this strategy, any one of the four scenarios would be likely to be accompanied by our retention of access. However, since other, especially Muslim Africans will have been the main mediators, a later dispute between the US or its allies and parts of the Arab world would probably have the denial of access as one of its consequences.

5. Direct US Mediation

The US would announce that, because of our friendship with all the parties and our long involvement on the Horn, we are offering to be of direct help to them in mediation efforts. Our aim would be to link the Eritrean and Somali disputes with each other, to involve Sudan and Kenya, Saudi Arabia and others in such a way, that regional interdependence would be heightened, while Somali dependence upon the Soviets would be reduced. This approach would carry the greatest risks and also, if successful, the greatest gains for the US. If it failed,

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PA/HO Department of State
E.O. 12958, as amended
May 4, 2006

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the US would be seen as bearing the major portion of the blame for its meddling. If the approach succeeded, the US would not only have secured its primary objective of needed access to the whole area including Somalia, but it would also reduce Soviet influence and the likelihood of future Soviet penetration. Moreover, we will also have an opportunity to refute in practice charges of benign or malign neglect of Africa, and thereby possibly prepare the way for subsequently playing some role in Southern African mediation efforts.

CONCLUSIONS

At present, the US has a policy but lacks a strategy. Because of the unpredictability of the immediate future, we do not need urgent changes in policy. A rapid deterioration due to massive use of violence seems unlikely, for two main reasons:

-- The complexity of overlapping interests engaged (military, tribal, religious, Arab, OAU, etc.) tends to confine the parties to limited action.

-- The parties lack sufficient means, both weapons and zeal, to break out of the confinements of complexity.

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E.O. 12958, as amended
May 4, 2006

REPRODUCED AT THE NATIONAL ARCHIVES

Continuation of our present policy -- optimal feasible responsiveness to MAP requests, continuation of friendly relations with the PMAC, watchful waiting in Eritrea, passive contacts with the ELF -- is not likely to reduce these inhibitions.

In light of these considerations, we tentatively conclude that we should stay on the present course pending a clearer definition of trends in Ethiopia. As a new scenario evolves, we should be ready to develop an appropriate policy within the conceptual framework suggested here. In the meantime, the following should be borne in mind:

-- Other African governments will be watching US responses to events in Ethiopia. Some would welcome a diplomatic debacle.

-- None of the governments in the region is very stable so that, if one or another is overthrown, alignments may shift radically and rapidly.

-- The OAU so far has consistently and successfully resisted boundary changes and secessions among its membership. It has accepted assassins and buffoons as equal "brother" heads of state.

-- Many Africans have demonstrated a remarkable capacity for reconciliation, so that outsiders

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E.O. 12958, as amended
May 4, 2006

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might harm their own interests by committing themselves to one party or the other in intra-African struggles.

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E.O. 12958, as amended
May 4, 2006