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MEMORANDUM

THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

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MEMORANDUM OF CONVERSATION

PARTICIPANTS: President Ford
Senator Dewey F. Bartlett (R-Okla.)
Senator Robert P. Griffin (R-Mich.)
Amb. Donald Rumsfeld, Assistant to President
John O. Marsh, Jr., Counselor to the President
Lt. General Brent Scowcroft, Deputy Assistant
to the President for National Security Affairs

DATE AND TIME: Monday, July 7, 1975
5:15 p.m.

PLACE: The Oval Office

SUBJECT: The Senators' Visit to Somalia



President: I would be interested in what you found in Somalia.

Bartlett: The Somali Colonel called the Soviet Ship a barracks ship and said we couldn't go aboard. The Colonel said he could go aboard or tell the ship to leave, but maybe they wouldn't and he would look bad. The ship services Soviet submarines.

There were lots of Soviets around. They were really all over the place. We got a briefing from the Greeks who were there for awhile. They said the Somalis threw rocks at them because they thought they were Soviets. The Soviets are very racist.

When we were going up to the construction facility, the guard cocked his rifle at us. The Colonel said it was a Soviet radio facility and he had asked permission twice to go in and had been refused. I said, "You are not in control then." He said no, but he didn't amplify that. It was a very powerful transmitter station. The technician we had got some good information from looking at the antenna. While we were looking at the antenna, the Somali Admiral was very nervous and there were six guards on the ground with their rifles trained on us.

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E.O. 12958, Sec. 3.5

NSC Memo, 11/24/74, State Dept. Guidelines
By KAH, NARA, Date 7/12/01

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They let five of us go to the missile facility, and again there were guards with rifles trained on us -- Somali guards. We went into the facility. In the warhead bunker there were only containers for five-inch shells -- which had nothing to do with the facility -- maybe to confuse us. Then we went into a high, long area. There was a large crane with a cab, which had a capacity of about 25 tons. It was big enough for any missile. There were dollies for hauling missiles.

We saw a Styx missile box. Our technicians felt the Somalis know nothing at all about the facility. The Somalis don't have any craft capable of using the Styx -- but they said they were getting them.

Then we went to the airport. Right now it's just crushed rock for a mile and a half. The whole runway is about 17,000 feet. The Somalis don't need that kind of runway. They said it's for flying cattle out.

Siad told us the invitation was not to see Berbera but the drought and refugee and relocation camps. Siad tried to divert me from Berbera. We did see one camp.

We all had the impression that Siad's hand of friendship is out to us.

President: Did the Ambassador go with you? I read he offered us the same facilities as the Soviets.

Bartlett: Yes. He has offered a port call at Mogadiscio. [Secretary of the Navy] Middendorf wants to take it up. The Ambassador says Somalia wants to offer us equal treatment with the Soviets. I think the door is open and I would recommend some high-level person to follow it up.

I also recommend some food aid. A third of their people are on a starvation diet. They are getting some aid but it is running out. They are taking a big risk -- moving nomads from the desert to the rainy area.

President: Give me a copy of your report. There is no doubt the Soviet facility is there?

Bartlett: Everything Schlesinger said is true. There was a big new building they said was a hospital. It couldn't be. Also there were three permanent barracks they said were for refugees. But they were housing refugees in temporary housing elsewhere. These were permanent facilities. Also there is a water pipeline with desalting equipment.

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President: Will this help us get Diego Garcia?

Bartlett: Yes, it will. But Culver and that crowd will say we should talk with the Soviets to talk them out of it. Mansfield's man Rexroad went with us and he agreed with us and the report -- but he will still oppose Diego Garcia.

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