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AmEmbassy ADDIS ABABA

February 7, 1973

Dissent Message

DISSENT CHANNEL

This airmgram transmits a dissenting view submitted by Basil Brown, Daniel Waterman and Edward Marcott of the Embassy Political Section. We request that this airmgram receive the same distribution as the messages it addresses (see below).

I. The purpose of this message is to record our disagreement with the analysis and recommendations of "Implications for U.S. Policy of the Somali Threat to Ethiopia" (Addis 782 of 1/22/73 and A-13 of January 24, 1973). Since our interpretation of recent developments, internal and external, differs from the Country Team's assessments, we find the options and recommendations inappropriate to the situation and counter-productive to U.S. interests. We believe that there is an alternative approach to the current situation.

II. ASSESSMENT

While we are not in a position to assess the military significance of the recent arms shipments to Somalia, we consider that the Country Team's paper exaggerated the "Somali threat" by not giving proper weight to the following factors: the domestic interests and problems of the Ethiopian ruling elite; the mutual responsibility for the Ethio-Somali conflict; the presence of Djibouti in the equation; the impact of Ethiopia's current relations with Sudan and Kenya; and the role of Israel.

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Brown-Waterman-Marcott

2/6/73

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1. Internal Situation

We believe that the Ethiopian ruling elite's perception of and reaction to the "Somali threat" has been greatly intensified by domestic stresses and risks to its future survival. The Emperor's 80th birthday and continuing uncertainty regarding a successor regime (further heightened by the Crown Prince's recent illness) have focused attention on the possibilities of internal chaos and risks to the future position of the present ruling elite. Reasons for the establishment's concern and consequent appeals for U.S. support include: serious institutional deficiencies and the prevailing moods of frustration and of absence of effective leadership within the government machine; discontent among ethnic groups and many of the educated class because of the corrupt and repressive system; failure of the "Amharization program" to cement a unified Ethiopia under Shoen Amhara domination; results of their unwillingness to institute land and other reforms which would have broadened the regime's appeal and reduced domestic tensions in the long run; failure to work with and "win over" elements of the population, most notably in Eritrea and the Ogaden, who are striving for greater local autonomy; and inefficiency in the military organization.

We interpret the IEG's reaction to the "Somali threat" and pressure on the U.S. for assistance and psychological support largely as attempts:

- (a) to insure the ruling group's ability to maintain its power and wealth during and after the succession;
- (b) to develop a rationale for a new pipeline to U.S. political, financial and military support in the event Kagnew Station should close down;
- (c) to provide a justification for increased military expenditures and for further delays in acting on significant economic and social reforms which are increasingly being pressed on the ruling elite by domestic interests and by foreign aid donors.

2. External

We believe that Ethiopia also bears some responsibility for the recent deterioration in Ethio-Somali relations, which have never been close since Somalia's independence in 1960. In recent months, the economic stakes of both sides in the disputed Ogaden region have increased greatly, as indications of the eventuality of probable commercial oil discoveries have become known. Moves by both sides led to border incidents in November, which were followed by two

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sessions of bilateral talks at the Foreign Minister level. From all available evidence, it appears that neither side made any substantial concession from its previous, well-known position. Inevitably, both sides used strong talk, with President Siad making what the Ethiopian Foreign Minister reports as a veiled threat to resort to force. At present, bilateral negotiations appear to be completely stalled, and the prospects for further talks over the Ogaden seem questionable without external pressures on both parties.

Somalia and Ethiopia have conflicting claims to Djibouti as well as to the Ogaden, which contributes substantially to their rivalry. Despite President Pompidou's recent statements of French intention to remain in the TFAI and the apparent acceptance of this by both sides (at least in the short run), neither has abandoned its claim, and each is probably prepared to move militarily to protect its interests, if and when France leaves Djibouti.

Other developments in the general area have sharpened the political confrontation between Ethiopia and Somalia. The recent satisfactory border settlement and general detente with Sudan have, at least for the foreseeable future, removed any "threat" to Ethiopia from the North, thus freeing resources for the Somali "front". Kenya and Ethiopia are on the verge of renewing their defense agreement and are keeping in close touch over the "Somali threat".

During the past year, five African states have broken relations with Israel. This has made Israel increasingly concerned about its position in Ethiopia, the "linchpin" of Israeli interests in Africa. We assume that Israel has encouraged Ethiopian concern over the "Somali threat".

III. OUR REACTION TO THE CT'S RECOMMENDATIONS

In view of our analysis of the current situation, we believe that the Country Team's options and recommendations not only do not address the real problems of Ethiopia but also are laying new groundwork for a continued U.S. military involvement in Ethiopia in the event that the USG decides to close Kagnew.

1. Military

We believe that what appears to be the Country Team's principal recommendation, the increase in military aid to \$11.5 million, is only the foot in the door. The referenced airgram provides a shopping list (page 8, para 3) in the event of Soviet deliveries of F-54 and MIG-21's, revealing the expectations of the Ethiopian government and the Country Team. The response to the Country Team's proposals should be framed with the next group of Ethiopian "requirements" clearly

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in mind, and with the realization that having taken the first step it will be difficult to refuse other "Somali threat"-related demands. We question the Country Team's assessment that additional arms deliveries to Ethiopia would be a stabilizing factor.

We consider it important to note that, given the inadequacy of the Ethiopian military, increments in weaponry have much less than commensurate effect on its overall capability. For example, large deliveries of modern communications equipment have not enabled Ethiopian forces in Eritrea to coordinate air support with ground maneuvers. In this context, the volume and cost of weaponry needed to assure "security" as the Ethiopian government perceives it, would involve a political and financial burden on the U.S., which we find unacceptable. A major weapons program would probably have a negative impact on U.S. interests by reinforcing the Ethiopian belief in a U.S. commitment and by raising the cost of disengagement. Furthermore, the Country Team ignores the real possibility that additional weapons would be used in Eritrea, thereby seeming to involve the U.S. in the decade-old insurgency, with possible risks to Kagnew.

2. Political

We believe that a "summit" meeting between the President and Emperor (and to a lesser extent, any meeting at the Cabinet level) should be avoided at the present time. Agreement to a "summit" meeting would signal to the Ethiopian Government that we accept their version of the "Somali threat" and would make it very difficult for the U.S. to avoid further military commitments.

We see no objections to consultations with other allies for an exchange of views (since we believe most other allies, as has France already, would tend to down-play the alleged "Somali threat".) However, we strongly disagree with the Country Team's option that the U.S. solicit military aid for Ethiopia from third countries, and particularly with the notion that the U.S. encourage Israel to become even more involved with the Ethiopian military.

3. Economic

The AID-related possibilities and recommendations for action in the Country Team's messages appear to us clearly contrary to the purpose of economic assistance. While the messages take note of the technical drawbacks to the various options, the overall significance and in our minds danger of shifting the priorities of U.S. economic assistance in Ethiopia from developmental to military are not properly weighed.

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We consider that one of the purposes of U.S. assistance is to encourage the receiving country to concentrate on economic and social development. By broadening the Agriculture Sector Loan to allow shifting of IEG funds for military purposes, by using part of a housing investment guarantee to allow purchases of military equipment, or by providing PL-480 wheat indirectly for military purposes, the USG would undermine long-term development prospects in Ethiopia, and thus its own interests.

We are concerned that "colonization" of the Ogaden could exacerbate the tension in that area and between Ethiopia and Somalia. We are also disturbed by recent indications of U.S. Mission encouragement of the Ethiopian Government to move ahead with such plans.

IV. OUR RECOMMENDATIONS

U.S. policy guidelines on Africa call for less direct U.S. involvement in African affairs, particularly military; African governments to solve their own problems emphasis on regional economic development projects; and international cooperation. Therefore, a viable long-term U.S. policy would avoid a commitment to the defense of Ethiopia and its territorial claims, or to maintenance of Ethiopia's military strength relative to its neighbors. It would also encourage the use of diplomatic channels for the settlement of bilateral disputes and in a longer term framework, promote cooperative ventures on the economic side. To this end we submit the following recommendations:

1. Mission officers should make it clear to the Ethiopian Government that the U.S. considers Ethiopia capable of meeting the foreseeable Somali military pressures, provided that it takes necessary measures to rationally allocate its resources, and to eliminate nepotism, corruption and political influence in the military program. They should also suggest that Ethiopia could enhance internal security in the Ogaden through a more equitable and development-oriented policy. At the same time, it should be made clear that the U.S. does not have any "special relationship" with Ethiopia other than existing treaty commitments, our desire for good bilateral relations, and our continued interest in Ethiopia's economic and social progress; nor does the U.S. have any intention of competing with the Soviet Union in the Horn of Africa.

2. The U.S. should strongly urge Ethiopia and Somalia to approach the Organization of African Unity (OAU) as the proper forum for discussion and mediation of the territorial and other disputes. The approaching 10th anniversary celebrations provides the IEG with the opportunity to set this in motion. Ethiopia has the stronger case by OAU standards since all African states have ample reason to avoid re-drawing colonial boundaries, the OAU being on record to this effect. Focusing attention in the OAU on Soviet arms deliveries to Somalia may

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encourage limitations on deliveries of offensive weapons. In an era of limited U.S. commitments, Ethiopia should develop a more self-reliant role in the world in which it must live.

3. We recommend planning now for expansion of Ethio-Somali economic cooperation, particularly in the Ogaden. (An example of a continuing technical joint venture is the campaign against rinderpest.) The U.S. and other foreign donors should encourage joint exploitation of natural resources affecting both countries, e.g. oil and the Webe Shabelle River. Such cooperation would exploit the area's potential in an efficient manner, develop the neglected land and people of the Ogaden, and reduce tension between Ethiopia and Somalia.

ADAIR

Classified by Parker D. Wyman, DCM.
Subject to Gen. Declass. Schedule of
Exec. Order 11652. Automatically down-
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