

NR/RA S (E)

February 22, 1978

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MEMORANDUM FOR: THE PRESIDENT

FROM: Cyrus Vance *CV*

1. The Horn - Ambassador Addou of Somalia called on me this afternoon with a "critical" message from Siad Barre. He said that a majority of Somali military officers had called upon Siad Barre to open a dialogue with the Soviet Union in view of the military situation. Siad Barre had refused and said this would never happen while he was President.

Addou made two requests: One, that the United States authorize third country transfer of U. S. arms urgently to Somalia. Second, that President Siad Barre be invited to the U. S. in order to show he had some moral support. I asked if Siad Barre was prepared to withdraw his troops into Somalia or to state that he was going to do so in conjunction with requesting arms. Addou replied indirectly that the arms request was without reference to a Somali withdrawal.

Addou said a senior Minister and the Somali Ambassador to the U. S. had been dispatched to Lagos to request that Obasanjo urge Bongo to call an emergency OAU meeting. He was unclear as to whether this delegation was authorized to enter into talks with an Ethiopian delegation also expected in Lagos.

2. Ethiopian Intentions Toward the Somalian Frontier - Mengistu has conveyed to you his assurances that Ethiopia does not intend to cross the Somali frontier. Such assurances would appear to be fairly strong; however, there have been several recent clandestine reports which refer to joint Ethiopian-Soviet planning of military operations that would involve incursions into Somali territory, including the occupation of areas of northern Somalia. One such report in particular, from a source with reportedly excellent access, has informed us that if the Somalis do not withdraw from all Ethiopian territory

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the Ethiopians are prepared to move into Somali territory, with Soviet concurrence.

There are several possible explanations for such reports of Ethiopian planning for a frontier crossing. They could be, but are not necessarily, in conflict with Mengistu's assurances, for various reasons. Moreover, the phraseology "with Soviet concurrence" may not necessarily mean that the Soviets have already given their agreement to an Ethiopian move into Somalia, but rather "provided that the Soviets gave their concurrence".

At this time, our judgment is that Mengistu would prefer not to cross the Somali border if he could achieve the withdrawal of the Somalis from Ethiopian territory by some other means. Nevertheless, Mengistu's decision will probably depend on whether or not he believes such a move would be necessary to get Somali forces out of all of the Ogaden. If there appeared to be no other way to achieve this objective, we believe that he probably would be prepared to cross the border.

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