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DEPARTMENT OF STATE

Memorandum of Conversation  
F750002-1053

DATE: June 11, 1973

SUBJECT: Somali-Ethiopian Relations; U.S.-Somali Relations

PARTICIPANTS: H.E. Dr. Abdullahi Addou, Somali Ambassador  
David D. Newsom, Assistant Secretary for African Affairs  
Wendell B. Coote, Director for East African Affairs  
Bruce C. Rogers, Country Officer for Somalia

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20 JUL 1973

Somali-Ethiopian Relations

Ambassador Addou said that the Somali-Ethiopian border problem had overshadowed all other issues during his recent consultations in Mogadiscio. There were periods, he said, when government leaders believed that an invasion of Somalia by Ethiopian troops was imminent. The Ambassador was elated at the outcome of the OAU Summit Conference and termed the decision of the OAU to create a good offices committee a "great Somali diplomatic victory." Somalia, he said, had made progress on two important points: 1) for the first time, the OAU had agreed to look into the border question; 2) Somalia had succeeded in convincing other African states to look at the Ogaden question because, contrary to other territorial problems in Africa including the Somali-Kenyan problem, this problem resulted not from European colonialism but from Black African (Ethiopian) imperialism. Ethiopia, he said, was a party to the partition of Somalia, having agreed with the European colonial powers to divide Africa at the Berlin Conference in 1884-85.

While agreeing that Somalia appeared to have been quite successful at the OAU meeting, Mr. Newsom noted that the Ethiopians nonetheless were obviously very fearful of a Somali military attack. He repeated the account he had given Ambassador Addou previously of heightened Ethiopian fears which Haile Selassie expressed during his May 15 visit to Washington. Whatever the merits, Ethiopia's

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fears were being fed by Soviet arms shipments to Somalia, including IL-28 bombers and more sophisticated tanks. Mr. Newsom urged the Somali Government not to discount totally those fears. The United States, he added, had never provided bombers to Ethiopia.

Ambassador Addou again inquired about our response to Ethiopian military aid requests during the Emperor's visit. Apparently some British news sources had reported a U.S. commitment to equip an Ethiopian tank brigade. The Ambassador was reassured that Ethiopia received nothing during the visit which could cause Somalia any uneasiness. Mr. Newsom commented that it was public knowledge that in recent years our military assistance to Ethiopia averaged \$10-12 million. At least 60-70% of this amount was for spare parts, upkeep, administration, etc. The remaining amount which was spent on new equipment was certainly far less, Mr. Newsom noted, than the amount spent on recent Somali military purchases from the USSR.

Ambassador Addou protested that Somalia was just receiving "droplets" from the Soviets which definitely were not more modern or sophisticated than Ethiopian equipment. He claimed that the Ethiopians were poorly informed as to the extent of the Somali arsenal and were apparently giving us false information. In reply Mr. Newsom pointed out that the intense Ethiopian fears had developed when Ethiopian military leaders observed modern Soviet-made weapons in last year's October 21 parade in Mogadiscio. Ambassador Addou then expressed the wish that U.S. observers should inspect Somali arsenals to verify his statement. Mr. Newsom suggested that the GSDR propose to the OAU that the eight-nation good offices committee do just that. He added that the GSDR might also give the committee a list of all arms in Somali hands. Such gestures, he said, would greatly relieve Ethiopian concerns.

The Ambassador stated that Somalia was willing to explore any path leading toward a peaceful solution of the territorial problem no matter how long that should take.

#### U.S.-Somali Relations

Ambassador Addou stressed the high priority President Siad placed on good relations with the United States. As proof of this, the Ambassador cited the fact that Ambassador Looram received an appointment with the Somali President before he did, even though the two of them had returned to Somalia on the same plane. The Ambassador added good-naturedly that Ambassador Looram's meeting lasted twice as long as his own. He commented that "no other Ambassador in Mogadiscio enjoys such a privileged position with the President."

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As evidence of Siad's desire to have a "deep, concrete relationship" with the United States, the President has decided to:

- 1) instruct his aides to review Government policy limiting official contacts between foreigners and Somali citizens. Since these limitations had been placed on contacts with all embassies, not just the Americans, they would, of course, have to be removed from all. The action was being taken, however, primarily because of President Siad's desire to open up contacts between the Somalis and Americans.
- 2) permit U.S. naval visits to Somalia. While any Somali port might be visited, the Ambassador recommended that the first visit be made to Mogadiscio.
- 3) invite Mr. Newsom to Somalia to observe first hand the improvement in U.S.-Somali relations.
- 4) encourage U.S. Congressmen to visit Somalia. Ambassador Addou said that the GSDR would issue official invitations to any Congressmen the Department might suggest. He hoped that the Department of State would assist him in stimulating Congressional interest in such a visit.

Mr. Newsom replied that the U.S. also desired the best possible relations with Somalia and noted that our good relations with Ethiopia have never precluded good relations with Somalia. He said we would be pleased to work with the Ambassador in seeing whether a Congressional visit to Somalia might be arranged. The timing would depend to some extent on the travel plans which various Congressmen might be considering during the summer recess and of course on funds made available by pertinent Committee chairmen in the Congress.

Mr. Newsom then asked the Ambassador if the North Vietnam-Cuban shipping issue arose during his consultations. Ambassador Addou admitted it had, but claimed that President Siad had finally realized the legal roadblocks to resuming U.S. aid to Somalia. The President hoped, however, that other aid problems, e.g., the SDB loan forgiveness, might be solved. Perhaps, Ambassador Addou added, the Vietnam and Cuban issues would be solved politically in the near future, and trade by Somali flag vessels with these countries would no longer be an obstacle to U.S. aid. Mr. Newsom sketched the aid legislation currently under discussion in Congress and stated that no one could predict what form future legislation would take.

Clearances: AF/E - Mr. Cootner  
AF - Mr. Newsom

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