



DEPARTMENT OF STATE

Washington, D.C. 20520

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September 4, 1974

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MEMORANDUM FOR LIEUTENANT GENERAL BRENT SCOWCROFT  
THE WHITE HOUSE

Subject: Issues Paper on the Horn of Africa

Attached is an issues paper for the President's briefing by the Secretary, which describes the situation in the Horn of Africa, with particular attention to the internal situation in Ethiopia, the Somalia-Ethiopia antagonism, and the U.S. military assistance program to Ethiopia.

*George S. Springsteen*  
George S. Springsteen  
Executive Secretary

Attachment:

As noted.

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THE HORN: ETHIOPIA AND SOMALIA

BACKGROUND

Ethiopia is at present in a highly volatile state. Early this year popular frustration over economic hardships and the slow pace of modernization erupted in strikes and demonstrations by labor, students, and the military. The result has been a new civilian government, dominated by the military, both committed to a program of constitutional, political, economic and social reforms which has already greatly reduced the power of Emperor Haile Selassie and the country's dominant aristocracy.

While these developments have so far not been accompanied by any bloodshed it is possible that the existing frictions within Ethiopian society and the vindictiveness being shown in some circles could lead to violence endangering the 3,500 Americans in the country. Internal security in the northern province of Eritrea is further impaired by an insurrection which has been going on since the early 1960s. The separatist Eritrean Liberation Front (ELF), which wants to make the province a separate state and has received support from Libya and Somalia, is currently holding hostage one Canadian and three American employees of Tenneco, who were seized over five months ago while prospecting for oil in northern Ethiopia. Our Embassies in Addis Ababa and Khartoum are working closely with Tenneco to procure their release, which we have reason to believe is imminent.

Another internal problem which the Ethiopian Government faces is a severe drought which has affected large parts of the country, causing an estimated 100,000 deaths, and for which large amounts of foreign assistance have been required.

Internationally Ethiopia's biggest problem has been with its neighbor, the Somali Democratic Republic. The present boundaries, drawn up during the colonial era, place a large proportion (750,000 out of a total of 3,500,000) of the Moslem Somali people outside of the Republic's borders. Somali nationalists have called for the union of all Somali people under one flag. The Somali Government accordingly claims certain parts of Ethiopia and Kenya as well as all the French Territory of the Afars and Issas (French Somaliland). A significant buildup in Soviet military aid to Somalia since 1972 now gives Somalia an edge over Ethiopia in certain major categories of weapons, such as tanks and aircraft. This upgrading of Somali military capability is a matter of profound concern to the Ethiopian Government.

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The sudden increase in the Somali arsenal led the IEG early in 1973 to ask for a drastic increase in the arms supplies which the United States had been providing Ethiopia for years under the Military Assistance Program (MAP). The United States responded to this appeal during the first half of this year by granting additional credits for the purchase of U.S. arms and agreeing to the Ethiopians' purchasing additional equipment with their own money. They are disappointed with this response believing that it is insufficient to meet the Somali threat.

### U.S. STRATEGY

The primary U.S. interest in the Horn is to prevent control of this strategic area from passing to unfriendly powers, a development which would result in the outflanking of our interests in the Arabian Peninsula. The principal instrument of our strategy has been Ethiopia, the only non-Arab country along the Red Sea and the second most populous country in black Africa (population 27 million).

Ethiopia has had a long tradition of friendship and cooperation with the United States. U.S. ships and military aircraft have had ready access to Ethiopian ports (Massawa and Assab) and airfields (Addis Ababa and Asmara). This access is especially important at a time when the number of ports in the general area that are open to U.S. naval vessels is limited. For many years we operated an important naval communications facility at Kagnew which is now being phased down. Finally, Ethiopia's western-oriented non-alignment, moderation on international issues, and friendship for the United States have frequently been supportive of our interests in regional and world councils.

Were a government unfriendly to the U.S. to come to power in Ethiopia or were Ethiopia to turn to unfriendly powers for military assistance, our interests would be jeopardized. In the light of the above factors we believe that it is in our interest to assist Ethiopia to remain an independent, cohesive, moderately inclined, and responsible nation. It was for this reason that the United States recently responded positively to the Ethiopian request for increased arms aid. Although we disagreed with the Ethiopian estimate that a Somali attack is imminent, we believed that a significant U.S. response was needed to the Somali-Soviet build-up. At the very least this action would bolster Ethiopia's confidence in its ability to defend itself and in the United States as a reliable associate.

The credits we have extended and the cash purchases we have agreed to, combined with our ongoing Military Assistance Program (MAP), if accepted by Ethiopia, would enable Ethiopia to acquire in the fiscal years 1974 and 1975, assuming Congressional approval of the funds requested for FY 75, about \$100 million in U.S. arms and equipment as against an average of about \$10 million per year in the immediately preceding years. The Ethiopian dissatisfaction with this offer pertains particularly to the slow delivery times on some items and the high proportion (over 50%) of cash purchases in the total package. The Defense Department has done its best to arrange prompt deliveries. --As for the high proportion of cash purchases we have no alternative given Congressional ceilings on grant and credit totals for each world region.

#### THE SITUATION NOW

It is not evident where the "creeping revolution" in Ethiopia will lead. The military's leadership in the political field, the Armed Forces Coordinating Committee (AFCC), remains an unknown factor with a constantly changing membership. There is still a fair prospect that the Ethiopian military will remain united and hold to its proclaimed policy of compelling the civilian government to effect needed reforms without instituting a military regime. The possibility that politically radical elements could gain the upper hand, abolish the monarchy, and reject the traditional Ethiopian ties with the United States cannot be excluded. Still another possibility is that the military, faced with the actual difficulty of Ethiopia's problems and unable to bring about simple solutions or quick progress, might turn in frustration to demagoguery, recklessness in foreign and domestic affairs, or military adventurism. The vindictiveness being shown toward former high officials and the harsh attacks on the Emperor appearing in the press are evidence of such a future possibility. Public threats to change the traditional ties with the United States and private warnings to us that Ethiopia may go to the Soviets for military aid also testify to the new leadership's unpredictability.

The future course of the Somali-Ethiopian territorial dispute is also uncertain. The dispute is presently under the scrutiny of a "good offices" committee of the Organization of African Unity (OAU) headed by General Gowon, President of Nigeria. Somalia is publicly pledged to seeking a solution

by diplomatic means and the election of President Siad of Somalia as OAU President for the year 1973-1974 has, in the estimation of many observers, including some Ethiopians, lessened the chances that Somalia would turn to military pressure to pursue its claims to Ethiopian territories. Nevertheless, public Somali statements eschewing the use of force are matched by editorials in the semi-official press calling for the recovery of Somali-populated territory at all costs, by military means if need be, and it is the official Ethiopian view that Somalia has already made a decision to attack in order to occupy the Ogaden area of eastern Ethiopia (see attached map). Some military officials claim this attack may occur before October 1974.

ISSUES AND CHOICES

Do we continue to grant and sell arms to a regime whose future is so uncertain? As long as there exists a possibility that the Ethiopian regime will wish to retain its close ties with the West, we should continue to carry out our program of military aid and sales as agreed. Suspension of these shipments would only strengthen the hands of the radical elements among the military and further frustrate the moderates, perhaps leading them to concur in more radical initiatives.

What more can we do to influence the situation favorably? As the amount of military assistance we can extend is severely limited, we believe we should continue to encourage appropriate third countries, namely Iran and Saudi Arabia, to provide any assistance they can to Ethiopia in acquiring the arms it considers necessary to face the Somali threat. The most appropriate means at this time would be financial assistance so that Ethiopia would not have to go into its own monetary reserves to acquire military hardware. Some Congressmen may be reluctant to continue to vote funds for development assistance or drought relief for Ethiopia if the Ethiopian Government spends large amounts of its own money on arms.

What action if any should we take in response to recent reports that the Ethiopians are considering loosening their close ties with the United States and accepting Soviet arms? We do not take seriously the report that the Soviets have offered to supply the arms that we have refused to supply. For one thing, the Soviets are unlikely to jeopardize their position in Somalia which they have gone to great lengths to establish. Moreover, it is out of character for the Soviets to move in so quickly to provide military equipment on the scale we are talking about. It is possible, however, that the Soviets

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might offer token aid. We do not think we should react to this possibility by offering more military equipment as we are already stretching our statutory authority to the limit with out present offer. We are instructing our Charge to find out more from the Foreign Minister about this alleged offer but not otherwise react to it.

NEXT STEPS

A better reading on where the situation in Ethiopia may be heading is needed. We are thinking of a direct overt approach to the AFCC, which presently holds ultimate authority but has so far refused governmental responsibility. At present we are dealing with the AFCC through the relatively weak intermediary of the civilian government. We believe this may blur our perception of what the AFCC stands for, its composition, and what it is capable of doing. A direct meeting with the AFCC leaders, cleared in advance with the civilian government, for the purpose of a wide ranging review of Ethiopia's future and of its ties with the U.S., might help clear the air and greatly increase our understanding of the situation and its potentialities.

We are also considering an approach on the subject of the Horn to the USSR, whose military supplies to Somalia are largely responsible for our problems there. An instruction is under preparation to our Embassy in Moscow to take up the subject with the Soviets, urging them to restrain any Somali tendencies to use military means or pressure to pursue territorial claims and proposing that we and the Soviets may have a mutual interest in working toward a cessation of military escalation in the Horn. At the very least this approach would help us in our relations with the Ethiopians.

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