

STATEMENT  
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TO PRESIDENT CARTER  
CONCERNING U.S. POLICY IN THE HORN OF AFRICA

Thursday, January 26, 1978

Mr. President: We have recently returned from a twelve day factfinding mission to the Horn of Africa. We met with four heads of state during our trip, including a rare session with Col. Mengistu Haile-Mariam of Ethiopia.

Attached is a copy of our report to Congress which provides an account of our meetings and an assessment of the current political situation in the Horn. In the report we also examine U.S. policy options and set forth our findings and recommendations.

Nowhere in Africa is there more potential for major instability and violent crises than in the Horn. Not even in Southern Africa are the problems as complex and acute. Nor on the African continent is there an area where the potential for East-West confrontation is greater or strategic questions more important. For the United States, both our security interests and those of our close allies are threatened. For Africans, the challenge of self-determination, the unraveling of established borders, and indeed the survival of some governments are at stake.

In recent years there has been an emerging uncertainty as to precisely what U.S. interests are in the Horn Region and what priority these interests should have in determining U.S. policy in Africa. Unfortunately, the rapid unfolding of events in the Horn, accompanied by rising passions regarding the Soviet and Cuban presences there, have not been conducive to formulating a viable and well-balanced U.S. policy toward the region.

Obviously this is a critical time for U.S. policy in the Horn of Africa. Actions and statements by the U.S. during the past year have made it difficult for Ethiopia to regard our official policy of total neutrality between disputing states as credible. Our apparent disinterest in helping Ethiopia--perhaps on the basis of its Marxist Government and sordid human rights record--has left a gap. At this point the Ethiopian Government has no viable alternative to Soviet domination. One wonders whether history is not repeating itself, reflecting Cuba's experience following the Revolution there. Quite legitimately, the U.S. is concerned about the massive Soviet supply of arms to Ethiopia which is unprecedented in scope and magnitude in African history. But at the same time, unless the U.S. pursues a prudent course, we risk the danger of treating Ethiopia

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simplistically, i.e. as a satellite of the Soviet Union rather than as an independent country seeking to hold itself together and repel an invading force.

This is not to imply that the U.S. should ignore the gross violations of human rights in Ethiopia, some of which we witnessed personally. Rather, it is through a policy of engagement that the U.S. has the best hope of encouraging respect for human rights in Ethiopia. Appointing a high-level ambassador and increasing our level of humanitarian aid to Ethiopia would be appropriate gestures of our good will, and representative of our commitment not to abandon the people of Ethiopia with whom the U.S. has had close historical ties.

At the moment, the largest challenge for U.S. policy looming very immediately on the horizon is the possibility of an Ethiopian attack on Hargessa and Berbera, to be used as a bargaining lever in effectuating a withdrawal by Somalia from the entire Ogaden area. In our opinion, this would greatly alter the present situation by making Ethiopia (backed by Soviet forces) an invader. It would also increase the prospect of sympathetic Arab states becoming directly involved on behalf of Somalia in the conflict.

Mr. President, we are encouraged by the willingness of yourself and other members of the Administration to meet with us and seriously consider our views. We hope the findings and recommendations which follow will be helpful in arriving at a better understanding of the complexities which underlie conflicts in the Horn of Africa. For our part, we look forward to working collaboratively with the Executive Branch in the interest of shaping a responsive and appropriate strategy for helping to bring peace and ease tension in that part of the world.

## FINDINGS

### THE HORN OF AFRICA

- \* The political situation in the Horn of Africa today is volatile and potentially dangerous. The Russian involvement in the Horn has proved both disrupting to the states involved and disturbing for U.S. security interests. The worst-case scenario would have the Soviets controlling or influencing potentially all but one (Sudan) of the countries in and around the Horn.
- \* No country in the Horn is so stable and secure that it cannot be threatened internally or externally--Communist activities and coup attempts are never remote possibilities.
- \* There are legitimate security implications for the U.S. and her allies in the Horn of Africa.
- \* Recent Soviet activities are incompatible with African nationalism and threatening to countries striving to maintain self-determination. While not wanting to minimize the serious nature of these activities, the recent experience of Egypt, Sudan, and Somalia suggests that in the end African nationalism is a more powerful political force than Communism in the African continent. The U.S. should recognize this, for, left to their own devices, African nations can resolve their disputes both collectively and individually far more effectively than the super-powers can do it for them.

### OGADEN CONFLICT

- \* Somalia-Ethiopia conflict in the Ogaden is serious and threatens the peace of the entire Horn. The conflict over the Ogaden will not be resolved militarily and a negotiated settlement appears unlikely at this time.
- \* The Ogaden is an area deeply rooted in conflict between the two countries, intensified by the fact that most Somalians inhabit a region belonging to Ethiopia, now at war due primarily to heavy Russian military aid to Somalia.
- \* The war is not just military adventurism, but it is an issue deeply felt at the grass roots in both Ethiopia and Somalia. It is a rallying point for political and military leaders in both countries engaged in the conflict.

- \* The OAU has proved ineffective in dealing with the Ogaden conflict. African leaders are understandably nervous about the Ogaden issue because it represents a possible "unraveling" of African borders--thus, they hold clearly to OAU's 1964 recognition of existing boundaries.

#### ETHIOPIA

- \* Addis Ababa is in a seige of terror and violence. Massive quantities of Russian military equipment and Russian-Cuban personnel are being sent to Ethiopia, through a major airlift program and the port of Mombassa in Kenya.
- \* Col. Mengistu is a thoughtful and determined, but unstable, leader who has permitted Russia to influence Ethiopia's political and military affairs, and allows terror and killings to purge opponents and solidify his power. His policies are seen in the context of a "revolutionary struggle" taken from post-Czarist Russia.
- \* Eritrea continues to be a vexing issue for the Derg, as it was for Haile Selassie, but Ethiopian control is unlikely due to religious and tribal differences that exist in the internal disarray in Addis.

#### SOMALIA

- \* Somalia's annexation plans for a "Greater Somalia" are a source of major problems in the Horn. President Siad Barre appears interested in ending the conflict in Ogaden through negotiation, but that includes a form of "self-determination" for the inhabitants of Somalia.
- \* Somalia is in desperate need of security assistance and, if none is provided, will lose in the Ogaden. Possibly Harghessa and the strategic port of Berbera may also be threatened, which could prove politically fatal to Siad Barre and pose security problems for the U.S.

#### SUDAN

- \* Sudan feels threatened by Ethiopia on one side and Libya on the other. President Nimeiri is willing to assist (equipment and even one brigade) Somalia if supported by OAU, Arab League, or the U.N. The Sudanese are helping the Eritreans in various non-military ways in their struggle against Ethiopia.
- \* President Nimeiri is a responsible and moderate leader who is promoting local autonomy and economic development that could be a model for all Africa.

## KENYA

- \* Kenya is militarily weak and may prove vulnerable to surrounding states. She is somewhat paranoid about an impending Somalian attack in the north and is preparing a case for an accelerated defense program.
- \* While presently allowing Russia to use her ports and roads to send supplies to Ethiopia to help fight against the Somalians, Kenya's greatest concern is with Ethiopia, and for that reason she could be enlisted in a strategy to contain Soviet influence in the area.
- \* The post-Kenyatta period could well be marked with political turmoil and uncertainty that could prove damaging to western interests there.

## EGYPT

- \* Egypt has expressed concern over Soviet activity in the Horn of Africa and is prepared to support efforts to contain and impede their influence.
- \* President Sadat has moral, religious, and political ties to Arab brothers in the Horn and has already demonstrated his support by giving arms (\$30 million) to Somalia and supplies to Sudan. He attaches great significance to North Africa and feels the U.S. should be more actively involved.