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DEPARTMENT OF STATE

Memorandum of Conversation

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DATE: February 24, 1971

SUBJECT: Current Situation in Somalia

PARTICIPANTS: H.E. Dr. Adbullahi Ahmed Addou, Ambassador of the Somali Democratic Republic
David D. Newsom, Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs

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In a private conversation with Assistant Secretary Newsom, Ambassador Addou gave his impressions after two months of consultation in Mogadiscio. In summary his observations were:

1. Somalia has "virtually lost its independence" to the Soviet Union. The Somali military is in charge of the government and Soviet advisers have a preeminent position in the Somali military. A Soviet Colonel is the principal adviser to Somali military intelligence and sees General Siad regularly. The Soviets are also influential in the Ministry of Information and are now moving into the economic areas and a Soviet adviser is being appointed in the President's office to coordinate the work of economic ministries.

2. The Chinese are active in economic projects. The latest is an offer, which the Somalis are considering seriously, for a 2,000-mile road to be constructed from Mogadiscio to Berbera. The Chinese would offer a no interest, long term loan.

3. General Siad remains suspicious of the U.S. His suspicion is undoubtedly fed by the Soviet advisers and by the younger officers who are supporters of the Soviets. The cutting off of aid and continued U.S. military assistance to Ethiopia also feed these suspicions. General Siad still believes that aid was cut off in order to undermine his regime. He claims that he had been prepared to withdraw the ships from trade with North Vietnam but our public announcement of the cutting off of aid came too soon.

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4. While relations with Kenya are good, relations with Ethiopia are deteriorating. Both the Ethiopian Ambassador in Mogadiscio and the Somali Ambassador in Addis spoke about this deterioration. Ambassador Addou did not give me specifics but suggested that the atmosphere was such that incidents could erupt at any time.

5. Ambassador Addou raised specifically with General Siad the possibility of a visit by Assistant Secretary Newsom. General Siad said he would welcome such a visit. The Ambassador stressed that he too felt that such a visit could still be useful (Mr. Newsom advised him that he was seriously considering a visit in May).

6. The position of the Italians is still strong and hopefully continued expressions of Italian interests in the economy and in business with Somalia will serve to maintain the influence. All Western influence in Somalia, however, is threatened by the current Soviet domination.

7. Ambassador Addou said he saw very little that the U.S. could do under present circumstances but urged that we keep open our communications. He said that the greatest preoccupation in Somalia is still the settlement of disputed territories with Ethiopia. Realizing all the difficulties he said that the one action which could reestablish American influence among the Somali military would be U.S. pressure on Ethiopia to settle the questions of the Ogaden and the Haud. Such a settlement would not need to provide all of the territory claimed by Somalia. Undoubtedly, Somalia would settle for less and American association with such a settlement could reverse the present trend.

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