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SECRETARY'S STAFF MEETING

Friday, January 3, 1975 -- 8:10 a.m.

PRESENT:

THE SECRETARY OF STATE - HENRY A. KISSINGER

D Mr. Ingersoll  
E Mr. Robinson  
M Ambassador Brown  
C Mr. Sonnenfeldt  
AF Mr. Mulcahy  
ARA Mr. Rogers  
EA Mr. Habib  
EUR Mr. Hartman  
NEA Mr. Sober  
INR Mr. Hyland  
S/P Mr. Lord  
EB Mr. Enders  
S/PKS Mr. Anderson  
S/AM Ambassador McCloskey  
PM Mr. Vest  
IO Ambassador Blake  
H Governor Holton  
L Mr. Feldman  
S/S v GAMMON  
S Mr. Bone

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[Omitted here are portions of the discussion unrelated to the Horn of Africa.]

MR. MULCAHY: The most bothersome thing on our platter at the moment is the situation in Eritrea, which from a security point of view continues to deteriorate. There is an Ethiopian government team t here which has been urged by the big collection of leaders to get into talks with the Eritrean Liberation Front.

SECRETARY KISSINGER: Who is behind the Eritrean Liberation Front?

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MR. MULCAHY: Particularly the Iraqis and Syrians. More recently the Libyans. The Eritrean Liberation Front is heavily Moslem, although there are Christian Eritreans. The competing group is a smaller Marxist group, which has a fair sprinkling of both Christians and Moslems -- a fair division between Moslems and Christians.

We have about 400 American citizens in the province at the moment. But we also have two naval vessels at the port of Massau in case things --

SECRETARY KISSINGER: To evacuate Americans?

MR. MULCAHY: If it would be necessary.

SECRETARY KISSINGER: So if Eritrea becomes independent, it will line up with Iraq and that sort of group?

MR. MULCAHY: It would be hard to say, sir. The population is about half-and-half between Christians and Moslems. I am not sure that an independent Eritrea would, for example, become a member of the Arab League. It would be over the objections of the Christian population.

SECRETARY KISSINGER: With whom would they line up? With the more radical non-aligned?

MR. MULCAHY: Yes, sir.

SECRETARY KISSINGER: Where is Ethiopia going these

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days?

MR. MULCAHY: That is a very important question, but I am not sure we have the answer to it. The group that seems to be predominating in the Military Council at the moment is the radical left-leaning group. They have been described as Maoists. But frankly, because of the faceless nature of the group, it is pretty hard to say that this is true. This is the evidence. They have gone to a pretty militant form of socialism, with nationalization of foreign banks and insurance companies, nationalization of --

SECRETARY KISSINGER: Is this Department capable of a self-critique? Could we analyze whether there is anything we could have done, like starting with getting out of that air base, whether that contributed to things?

MR. MULCAHY: Well, we have in effect closed down the communications facility.

SECRETARY KISSINGER: I know. But whether our withdrawal two years ago, and our cutting down of military assistance over the years, whether that contributed. Could somebody give me an assessment -- Bill -- just for my own education. I don't know anything about Ethiopia. I am struck by the fact that Sadat predicted to me what was going to happen and blamed it on us two months before

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it happened.

MR. MULCAHY: Well, in effect we really have not reduced our military assistance there in any large amount. I think we went along for many years giving at about the rate of \$16 million a year. We dropped to about \$11 million. But we have gone back to approximately \$22 million.

SECRETARY KISSINGER: Going from \$16 million to \$11 million is a 33 percent cut. You can say \$5 million isn't important -- but you can also say if you pull out an air base and reduce your aid from \$16 million to \$11 million in an inflationary period, in effect cutting it by half, it could be taken by some as a loss of interest.

MR. MULCAHY: Well, of course a good part of it was congressionally imposed.

SECRETARY KISSINGER: I am not blaming us. I just want to find out whether there were any American actions. Removing the base was not a State Department idea. That was a Navy idea, to establish a claim to Diego Garcia.

MR. MULCAHY: We can look into the history of that, sir.

SECRETARY KISSINGER: I would like to find out for my own education what the forces were that produced this;

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but also with special attention to whether any American actions in our judgment in retrospect contributed to it. Because with this list of congressional restrictions on us, this may be happening in a lot of places.

Can you do that?

MR. HYLAND: Yes, sir.

SECRETARY KISSINGER: By the middle of next week.

Okay.

[Omitted here are portions of the discussion unrelated to the Horn of Africa.]

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