

February 27, 1975

Henry:

I am not sure the specific recommendation (to provide \$8 million worth of ammunition) has been very carefully thought through.

Why, for example, do we think that \$8 million will be either more or less palatable to the Eritrean rebels than, say, \$30 million or \$4 million? It seems to me that, from the standpoint of the rebels, the critical factor is whether or not the U.S. is putting bullets into what otherwise would be empty rifles. I cannot see any deeper logic to the \$8 million figure than that it brings stocks up to the pre-hostility levels.

We have a potentially very serious decision on our hands, one filled with unknowns and imponderables. As I sift through the various elements, however, I conclude that our basic interest, if it can reasonably be obtained, is the maintenance of the territorial integrity of Ethiopia. In a dismembered Ethiopia, we would be highly unlikely to be able to retain substantial influence in any portion but the relatively worthless center "rump". In order to know more about the prospects for preserving territorial integrity, I would consult with the man in whose backyard this problem lies, and who ought to be deeply concerned in the evolution of the problem. I think, therefore, that you should delay decision until you can discuss the situation seriously with Sadat and ascertain where he thinks his interests lie. I would be surprised if he wanted a radical Arab regime on the Red Sea.

What we do not know, at least from the WSAG papers, is whether there is time available to delay until you can consult with Sadat. I would ask Defense how long supplies will last at the current rate and what is the shortest period of time required, after a decision, to resupply them sufficiently to enable them to continue fighting.

Brent

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