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ACTION AF-18

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P R 240940Z FEB 73
FM AMEMBASSY ADDIS ABABA
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 3346
INFO AMCONSUL ASMARA
AMEMBASSY MOGADISCIO

S E C R E T ADDIS ABABA 2197

SUBJ: CONVERSATION WITH PRIME MINISTER

1. I CALLED ON PRIMIN AKLILU FEB 23 AT MY REQUEST; FONMIN MENASSIE UNEXPECTEDLY PRESENT. FOLLOWING GREETING, FONMIN SAID "YOU HAVE JUST RETURNED FROM WASHINGTON; WHAT DID YOU FIND THERE?" I REPLIED IN GENERAL TERMS. AKLILU THEN ASKED WHETHER PEOPLE IN WASHINGTON HAVE FULL APPRECIATION OF SOMALI THREAT TO ETHIOPIA. I RESPONDED THAT I HAVE FOUND DIVERSE VIEWS UPON THIS QUESTION BUT HAD SOUGHT PASS ON MY OWN UNDERSTANDING OF ETHIOPIAN CONCERNS WHILE THERE. I HAD EMPHASIZED ALSO THAT RUSSIANS APPEARED REGRETTABLY BE PUTTING CONSIDERABLE AMOUNT MILITARY MATERIEL INTO SOMALIA.

2. PRIMIN AKLILU THEN CAREFULLY WENT OVER BACKGROUND ETHIO-SOMALI RELATIONS IN RECENT YEARS. SPEAKING VERY SERIOUSLY, HE CONCLUDED THAT ONLY REASON SOMALIS HAD NOT ALREADY SEIZED LARGE SLICE ETHIOPIAN TERRITORY WAS THAT MOGADISCIO NOT STRONG ENOUGH MILITARILY DO SO. HE NOTED SOMALIS ALSO CLAIM KENYAN TERRITORY AND SAID THAT ONLY WAY PREVENT OMALI EFFORT TAKE ETHIOPIAN LAND WAS FOR EMPIRE TO BE AT LEAST AS STRONG MILITARILY AS WAS SOMALIA. AKLILU, REFERRING TO ETHIOPIAN INTELLIGENCE RE-PORTS AS WELL AS ARTICLES PUBLISHED ELSEWHERE, ASSERTED VEHEMENT-

LY THAT RECENT RUSSIAN DELIVERIES HAS SWUNG WEIGHT OF MILITARY

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STRENGTH TO SOMALIA. THIS DEVELOPMENT THREATENED PEACE BETWEEN SOMALIA AND ETHIOPIA AND INVOLVED RISK HOSTILITIES, WHICH IF THEY OCCUR, MIGHT ALSO INVOLVE OTHER AFRICAN STATES AND POSSIBLY EVEN GREAT POWERS.

3. THESE REALITIES ALREADY REFLECTED IN SOMALI ATTITUDES, AKLILU SAID. IN RECENT BILATERAL CONVERSATIONS, INCLUDING SOME WITH FONMIN, SOMALIS HAS SPOKEN CONDESCENDINGLY TO ETHIOPIANS SAYING EITHER THEIR DEMANDS FOR TERRITORIAL CESSION WOULD BE MET OR THEY WOULD TAKE FURTHER ACTION. DR MENASSIE STRONGLY CONCURRED WITH PRIMIN'S STATEMENTS.

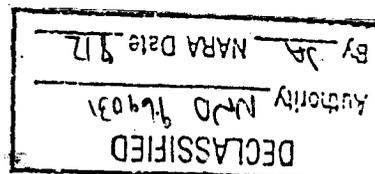
4. THEY THEN PRESSED ME FOR MORE SPECIFICS ON WHAT US PREPARED DO TO ASSIST ETHIOPIA. I PARRIED, SAYING THAT ALTHOUGH I HAD DISCUSSED QUESTION WITH WASHINGTON AGENCIES CONCERNED, WE NOT IN POSITION GIVE THEM FULL ANSWER BECAUSE FINANCIAL AND OTHER RESOURCES AVAILABLE TO USG FOR MILITARY ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS WORLD WIDE STILL UNDETERMINED.

5. PRIMIN, SMILING WRYLY, SAID HE WISHED ETHIOPIA HAD MONEY SO THAT IT COULD MEET ITS NEEDS BY PURCHASE FROM US, MONEY SIMPLY NOT AVAILABLE, HOWEVER.

6. AKLILU THEN ASKED WHETHER HIGH-LEVEL ETHIOPIAN GROUP SHOULD VISIT WASHINGTON TO DISCUSS MILITARY ASSISTANCE "BEFORE OR AFTER EMPEROR DOES." INFERENCE THAT IEG HAD ALREADY DECIDED SEND SUCH GROUP WAS CLEAR. WITH REGARD TO HIM, THERE NO INDICATION THEY THINKING OF EMPEROR'S VISIT TO US IN CONJUNCTION ANY OTHER. INFERENCE WAS THAT QUESTION MILITARY ASSISTANCE SO SERIOUS IT HAD TO BE RESOLVED AT HIGHEST LEVELS AS SOON AS POSSIBLE.

7. I RESPONDED THAT, IN MY OPINION, GROUP SHOULD NOT, REPEAT NOT, GO TO WASHINGTON AT THIS TIME FOR REASON ALREADY CITED: RESOURCE AVAILABILITY REMAINED UNKNOWN.

8. THERE WAS STRONG REACTION TO MY EXPRESSION THIS VIEW WHICH PRIMIN AND FONMIN INTERPRETED TO MEAN THAT SOME MONTHSMIGHT ELAPSE BEFORE SUCH A VISIT SHOULD BE MADE. THEY MADE CLEAR THEIR VIEW THAT IEG POSITION SHOULD BE SET FORTH IN WASHINGTON AS QUICKLY AS POSSIBLE SO THAT OUR PLANNING FOR NEXT FISCAL YEAR MIGHT TAKE IT INTO ACCOUNT. I DID NOT ENCOURAGE IDEA OF ETHIO-

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PIAN VISIT IN IMMEDIATE FUTURE.

9. AS MEETING CLOSED, PRIMIN AND FONMIN ASKED ME TO CONVEY IEG CONCERNS TO WASHINGTON IN STRONGEST TERMS NOTWITHSTANDING FACT

I HAD INFORMED THEM THIS HAD BEEN DONE DURING MY RECENT CONSUL-TATIONS.

10. TOWARD END OF CONVERSATION I ASKED AKLILU AND MENASSIE WHETHER THEY HAD SPOKEN TO RUSSIANS ABOUT THEIR ASSISTANCE TO SOMALIS. THIS BROUGHT SMILE FROM BOTH. THEY SAID THEY HAD TALKED TO SOVIETS AND LATTER HAD REPLIED IN ESSENCE "WHY DON'T

YOU ASK US FOR MILITARY ASSISTANCE AND THEN WE WILL SEE WHO GETS THE MOST." AKLILU MADE POINT THAT ETHIOPIA DID NOT WISH BE CONSTRAINED RELY UPON USSR BUT HOPED THAT THEIR FRIENDS OF LONG STANDING COULD AND WOULD PROVIDE IEG WITH REQUISITE ASSISTANCE.

11. COMMENT: THIS IS BY FAR STRONGEST PRESENTATION MADE TO ME WITH RESPECT TO IEG' DESIRE TO INCREASE MILITARY ASSISTANCE AND FOR EARLY VISIT OF EMPEROR WITH PRESIDENT. I HAVE NO DOUBT WHATEVER THESE PRESSURES UPON US WILL CONTINUE. CONVERSATION WAS PLEASANT THROUGHOUT AND THERE NO RECRIMINATIONS ALTHOUGH PRIMIN AND FONMIN STATED THEIR POSITIONS STRONGLY, STRAIGHT FORWARDLY AND IN FRIENDLY MANNER.

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