

Top Secret 019

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NATIONAL INTELLIGENCE DAILY CABLE

Wednesday 16 November 1977

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NATIONAL SECURITY INFORMATION
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National Intelligence Daily Cable for Wednesday, 16 November 1977

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The NID Cable is for the purpose of informing senior US officials.

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USSR (Dissident)
USSR (Fertilizer)

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USSR - MIDDLE EAST: Response

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[redacted] The USSR has responded negatively to the current Egyptian-Israeli dialogue [redacted]

[redacted] Moscow is clearly concerned that recent developments will enable the US to resume its role as the major participant in step-by-step talks from which the Soviets would be excluded.

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[redacted] Pravda yesterday accused the Israelis of trying to "divorce" Egypt from the rest of the Arab world and of trying to prevent a solution of the Palestinian problem. Soviet broadcasts in Arabic for the past several days have been critical of President Sadat and have warned of a possible sellout of the Palestinians.

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[redacted] The Soviets appear particularly concerned with Sadat's willingness to ignore procedural problems connected with a resumption of the Geneva conference in order to get the talks started. At the heart of these procedural issues has been the question of Palestinian representation at Geneva, which the Soviets will presumably exploit if their views are not taken into consideration.

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[redacted]

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[redacted] The Soviets presumably fear more than anything else the achievement, or even the illusion, of some stabilization in the area through negotiations from which they have been deliberately excluded. The Soviets apparently realize that they have little genuine leverage over the course of negotiations in the Middle East and are particularly concerned with regional and international perceptions of the Soviet role. [redacted]

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SOMALIA-ETHIOPIA: Reactions

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 // Somalia's expulsion of the Soviets on Sunday will speed the deterioration of the Somali military and eventually weaken its ability to withstand an Ethiopian counter-offensive--unless President Siad can find a supplier of parts,

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ammunition, and replacement equipment for his Soviet inventory. He is gambling that recent deliveries or promises of Arab, French, and Chinese military aid will permit Somalia to maintain a credible military deterrent against Ethiopia in the near term. In particular, and to protect Somalia's longer term interests, Siad is probably out to win support from the US.//

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[redacted] //The likely termination of all Soviet military deliveries will not result in an immediate change in the military situation in the Ogaden. The Somalis, however, probably need more tanks, antitank weapons, antiaircraft artillery, and a steady--if only modest--flow of spares and ammunition for nearly all weapons systems in their inventory if they are to stand up to the Ethiopians for long. The Somalis may not have enough time to absorb the necessary equipment before the Ethiopians go on the offensive.//

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[redacted] //Siad may be exaggerating when he says he has information that an Ethiopian counteroffensive backed by the Soviets and Cubans will come within two or three weeks. Our own view now is that Ethiopia will at least launch a limited offensive within the next six weeks, which could regain some lost ground in the Ogaden and turn the tactical situation around. A concerted, full-scale Ethiopian attack, probably including an effort to seize some territory inside Somalia, could be delayed for as long as several months, however, because of low morale among some units and the need for time to assimilate fully new Soviet equipment.//

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[redacted] //Cuban technicians and advisers will probably play an increasingly important logistic role in the Ethiopian military, particularly as it prepares to go over to the offensive. Cubans and Yemenis are now maintaining some of the more advanced Soviet equipment in the Ethiopian inventory, freeing the Ethiopians to concentrate on learning to operate it.//

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[redacted] //We believe Siad's move is aimed particularly at winning US support. He would welcome direct US military aid, but he would be largely satisfied if the US approved third-country transfer of US arms to Somalia or agreed to supply Egypt with US arms if the Egyptians transferred Soviet equipment to Somalia. At a minimum, Siad is gambling that he will have tacit US political support for Somalia to maintain control

of the Ogaden. In his view, a concerted Western diplomatic effort to forestall a Soviet-supported Ethiopian counteroffensive would provide concrete evidence of such political support.//

25X1 [redacted] //Siad's recent campaign stressing the dangers of Soviet hegemony in the Horn of Africa was designed to provide the rationale for a Western initiative against the USSR and Ethiopia. His best long-term hope now is to promote a great power confrontation in the region, identify his course with the West, and thereby keep what he has won so far. This implies that, at least for this round, he has given up hope of obtaining more Ethiopian territory.//

25X1 [redacted] //In this context, Siad will expect the Arabs to be more forthcoming with aid, and he can count on the Saudis, Egyptians, and other moderate Arabs to press more urgently for the US and the West Europeans to provide major assistance to Somalia.//

25X1 [redacted] //We doubt that Siad is yet interested in meaningful negotiations. He might agree to talks, since he realizes that at this point he would be bargaining from a position of strength. He is unlikely to make any real concessions to the Ethiopians. If he had envisaged a political solution granting concessions to the Somali inhabitants of the Ogaden while leaving the area under Ethiopian control, he probably would have asked the Soviets to arrange such a settlement. Ethiopia, for its part, continues to insist that negotiations are unacceptable until Somali forces withdraw from the Ogaden.//

25X1 [redacted] //Ethiopia's domestic security problems have not yet had a major impact on the war effort. The assassinations of government officials in Addis Ababa being carried out by radical leftist civilian opposition groups are likely to continue, but the groups are not likely to pose a serious threat to the government. A worsening of the security situation in the capital would detract the government's attention from the Ogaden and might cause it to postpone a decision to launch a counteroffensive against Somalia.//

25X1 [redacted] //The execution last week of Atnafu Abate, the vice chairman of the ruling military council, seems to have stemmed from Atnafus personal opposition to the regime's socialist policies and does not appear to reflect a serious

cleavage among council factions.

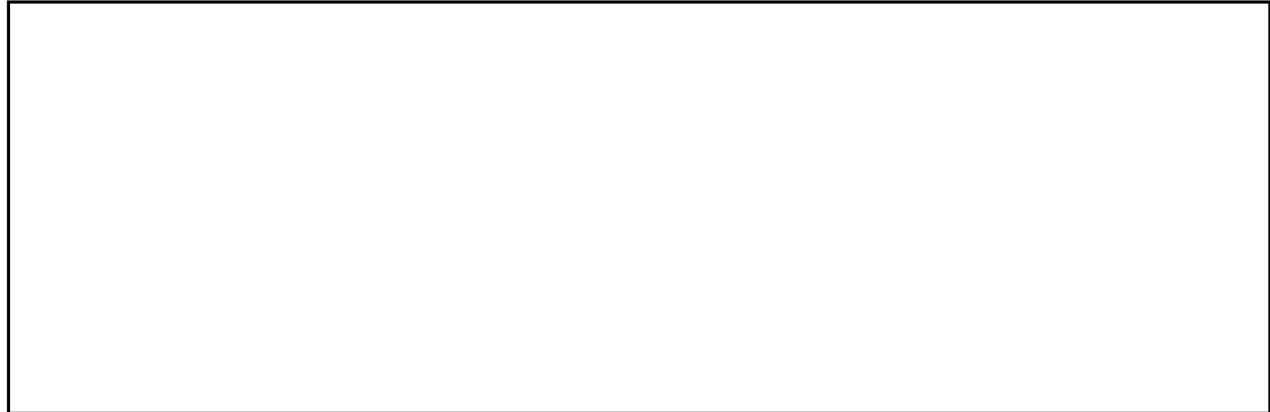
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[Redacted] //Atnafu's execution does not necessarily presage a return to the stridently pro-Soviet policy that the council followed earlier this year. Ethiopian officials in recent weeks have continued to express a desire for better relations with the US. We believe Mengistu continues to favor this policy, but Ethiopia's increasing dependence on the USSR may yet frustrate Ethiopia's slight opening in the West.

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USSR-SOMALIA: Public Reactions

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[redacted] In its first public reaction to Somalia's announcement on Sunday severing military ties with the USSR and ordering the withdrawal of Soviet personnel, Moscow blamed the breach entirely on Mogadiscio. Moscow will now have to move quickly to recoup its losses. Its position in the US-Soviet Indian Ocean talks has been weakened and the Chinese are already exploiting the third Soviet defeat in northeast Africa in five years.

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[redacted] In both its international and domestic broadcasts, TASS yesterday asserted that Mogadiscio's action was prompted more by Somali "chauvinist, expansionist moods" than by common sense and that it was the result of Soviet refusal to support Somalia's territorial claims and its "fratricidal war" against Ethiopia.

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[redacted] The TASS release continues Moscow's basic line since mid-August, which has emphasized the principle of territorial integrity espoused by the Organization of African Unity. Now that the contradiction inherent in its earlier support of both Somalia and Ethiopia has been removed, Moscow can give its full support to Ethiopia and the OAU.

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[redacted] Somalia's announcement was a severe psychological blow that weakens the Soviet position in the area. Until the Soviets began to move into Angola and Ethiopia, Somalia was the USSR's most important asset in black Africa. The USSR saw

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its presence there both as balancing Western and Chinese influence elsewhere on the continent and as an example of Soviet generosity and loyalty to the rest of Africa.

25X1 [redacted] As important as Somalia may have been to Soviet African policy, its real value lay in its strategic location near the Red Sea and on the Indian Ocean. Since 1972, the USSR had regarded Somalia as replacing Egypt in ensuring its access to and influence in the Red Sea region. Moreover, Soviet holdings in Berbera facilitated the expansion of the Soviet naval and political presence in the Indian Ocean area. The Soviet Indian Ocean squadron will still be able to operate, but the loss of Berbera will pose major inconveniences.

25X1 [redacted] The New China News Agency yesterday characterized Somalia's action as "a just action against hegemonism." The Chinese have long been critical of the Soviet role in the Horn and have supplied small amounts of small arms to Somalia. Although the Chinese can probably do little for Somalia in terms of larger weapons, they will almost certainly provide political support. Peking is likely to keep the door open to Ethiopia, however, by couching its support in anti-Soviet terms. [redacted]

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NAMIBIA: Regulations Repealed

25X1 [redacted] Justice Steyn, the Administrator-General for Namibia appointed by South Africa, has repealed emergency regulations in northern Namibia and replaced them with less stringent measures. His action accords with South Africa's strategy of going along with efforts by the Western contact group to devise an internationally acceptable independence program for Namibia and at the same time paving the way for proceeding with its own program.

25X1 [redacted] The repeal of Emergency Proclamation R-17, which has been in effect in Ovamboland since 1972, and of similar regulations extended to Okavangoland and Caprivi in 1976 is probably the most significant action undertaken by the Administrator-General since his appointment in September. It reflects Steyn's policy of lifting as many repressive or discriminatory regulations as possible without losing effective control over the population.

25X1 [redacted] Although the regulations apply only to northern Namibia, this is where more than half of the population lives and where the South-West Africa People's Organization has its primary support.

25X1 [redacted] Permission is no longer needed to hold meetings in this area, although 24-hour notice of intention to meet is still required. The judicial power of tribal authorities has been abolished, and the sentence for contravening security regulations that are still in force throughout Namibia has been reduced.

25X1 [redacted] Although the indefinite detention clause has been dropped, a person can still be detained up to 96 hours without being entitled to legal advice. Provisions for search without a warrant of any person, place, or vehicle have been retained.

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[redacted] Steyn undoubtedly was under some pressure from the military and the traditional chiefs not to repeal the emergency regulations and may have retained the search and detention measures for this reason. According to Steyn, the new regulations will remain in force "until the situation warrants their withdrawal."

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[redacted] Earlier this month, Steyn assumed control of the prisons as part of a general effort to transfer the functions of government departments to the office of administrator-general. His action probably will not have any effect on Namibian political prisoners; commutation of their sentences remains the prerogative of the South African state president. [redacted]

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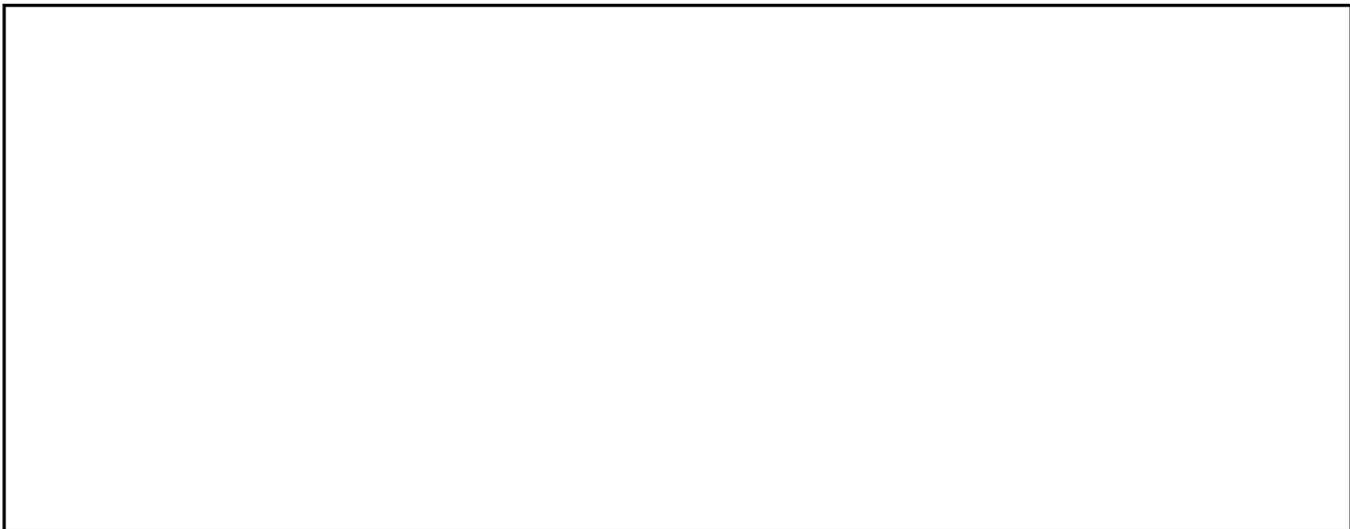


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BRIEFS

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[REDACTED] The Soviets have apparently taken another step toward a possible trial of dissident Anatoliy Shcharanskiy, who was arrested in mid-March. Shcharanskiy's family, according to Western newsmen in Moscow, were summoned to Lefortovo prison today, and there is speculation that the authorities will ask them to retain a lawyer for Shcharanskiy. Two weeks ago the wife of another prominent dissident, Aleksandr Ginzburg, was asked to obtain a lawyer for her husband.

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[REDACTED] As in Ginzburg's case, this move suggests that the investigation against Shcharanskiy is over and an indictment may be near. In Shcharanskiy's case the Soviets are evidently following the letter of their criminal procedural code, which calls for release or indictment within nine months of arrest.

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[REDACTED] Shcharanskiy has repeatedly been accused of espionage by the Soviet press, and there has been speculation he might be charged with treason. A public indictment would put formal weight behind the accusations but would not necessarily prejudice the outcome of the case. Since the courts could continue the case, the timing of any trial remains uncertain.

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25X1 [redacted] According to a Western press report from Leningrad, 30 local dissidents demanded yesterday that Moscow immediately release Shcharanskiy and begin an inquest into what they called illegal interrogations connected with the case. [redacted]

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25X1 [redacted] A Soviet ammonia fertilizer plant now under construction will use a new process that produces large amounts of liquid ammonia at considerably reduced energy consumption and cost compared with the more commonly used system. The plant and its planned pipeline distribution system should be complete by 1980. They will significantly benefit Soviet agriculture by making relatively low-cost ammonia fertilizer available to major farming areas in the southwestern USSR.

25X1 [redacted] The plant, which is being constructed at Tolyatti in the east-central European USSR, probably will use Kellogg-type and Chemico metal-catalyst systems that produce ammonia at lower temperatures and pressures than the more widely used Haber-Bosch system. The plant will need only 5 percent of the electricity usually required to operate such a facility and only 50 to 60 workers, about a tenth the number normally required.

25X1 [redacted] The finished product is expected to cost about 50 percent less than fertilizer produced by the conventional method. The Soviets are building a 2,195-kilometer pipeline to carry the liquid ammonia from Tolyatti southwest to Odessa on the Black Sea. [redacted]

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