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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY
DIRECTORATE FOR INTELLIGENCE

4 March 1982

MEMORANDUMSomalia: Status of the Armed Forces*Summary*

Somali President Siad, who begins a visit to Washington on 9 March, will seek increased military assistance in addition to expanded economic and political support. Since he signed the military access agreement with the United States in 1980, Siad has attempted to become more closely identified with the US and has counted on Washington and its allies to rebuild his country's weak and disorganized military.

The effectiveness of Somalia's armed forces has declined steadily since the end of the 1977-78 Ogaden War with Ethiopia. This deterioration has been largely the result of combat losses--both the Army and Air Force lost approximately 50 percent of their inventories in the war--aging equipment, poor maintenance procedures, and the lack of standardized equipment. The armed forces, totally supplied by Moscow until the Somali-Soviet break in military relations in 1977, now have a mix of Soviet, Chinese and Western equipment. The military also is experiencing personnel problems that weaken its

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combat capability. Tribal rivalries and economic unrest have led to intra-unit clashes and a breakdown in unit discipline. These trends are undermining the military's support for President Siad, who relies on it to stay in power.

A substantial increase in military aid to Somalia by the United States and its allies would strengthen Siad's domestic position temporarily, but it also would carry a number of risks. A revitalized Somali military probably would expand its support to insurgents in Ethiopia's Ogaden Region and would be tempted to reinsert regular combat forces into the Ogaden to disrupt Ethiopian and dissident Somali operations. The US and its allies would then find themselves open to charges of abetting Somali irredentism. An improvement in Somalia's military capabilities would be especially upsetting to Kenya, which remains an object of Somali irredentism and also has a military access agreement with the United States.

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The Military's Predicament

The deficiencies in Somalia's armed forces significantly reduce its ability to respond to any concerted Ethiopian ground attack or air activity, and to raids by anti-Siad Somali dissidents. Ethiopian-supported insurgent operations, for example, are successful because the Somali military lacks a quick response capability and has little experience in counter guerrilla fighting.

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Mogadishu has had little success in attempts to solve its military problems. Siad's efforts to acquire Western arms have been frustrated by his refusal to renounce Somalia's irredentist claims on Ethiopia, Djibouti, and Kenya. Somali technicians have tried to keep some Soviet equipment in working order by cannibalizing parts from damaged materiel but because of declining inventories this effort is no longer effective. Attempts to purchase spare parts have been frustrated by Somalia's dismal economic situation--it has almost totally depleted its foreign exchange--and the refusal of the Soviets to provide any assistance since their expulsion. Romania has sold some equipment to Somalia, but deliveries have been limited by Bucharest's demand for cash payment. In the non-Warsaw Pact countries that have Soviet weapons, spare parts are either hard to find or are overpriced. Egypt, for example, has provided assistance to Somalia, but Cairo's prices are high and it also demands cash.

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acquisition of non-Soviet equipment has compounded its predicament. British tanks, Italian armored personnel carriers and aircraft, and Chinese fighter-bombers have placed additional burdens on Somalia's maintenance personnel and its inefficient logistical network. In addition, many of these weapons are old and spare parts for them are costly and difficult to obtain. [REDACTED]

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The problems of the Somali military are so fundamental and widespread that only a total rebuilding effort would enable the country to defend itself effectively. The Army, however, does have some capability to concentrate its limited resources for specific operations. In these situations, it can coordinate its forces, perform needed maintenance, and logistically support its troops in combat. The improvement in the Ethiopian forces along the border, however, has offset this capability during the past year. [REDACTED]

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The Threat to Somalia

Ethiopia and Libya are the main external threats to Somalia, although their motives for wanting to overthrow the Siad regime differ. Ethiopian leader Mengistu wants to blunt Somalia's irredentist threat. He also is seeking revenge for Somalia's 1977-78 invasion of Ethiopia and Mogadishu's continued support to guerrillas in the Ogaden Region. Qadhafi, on the other hand, resents Siad's support for the Camp David Accords, his close ties with Egypt, and Mogadishu's granting the US access to its air and naval facilities. [REDACTED]

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Addis Ababa and Mogadishu are engaged in a long standing conflict for control of the ethnic-Somali inhabited areas of eastern Ethiopia. Since independence in 1960, Somalia has consistently assisted insurgent operations in the region, and the two countries have clashed in two wars and numerous border incidents. [REDACTED]

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During 1980-81, Ethiopia expelled elements of the regular Somali Army that had been supporting the Somalia guerrillas, and substantially weakened the insurgency through an aggressive military campaign. This allowed Addis Ababa to reestablish its military superiority along the border. It has used this edge to conduct occasional limited ground incursions across the border and to fly airstrikes against military targets in Somalia to retaliate for Mogadishu's support to the guerrillas. [REDACTED]

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In addition to using its regular forces to undermine Siad, Ethiopia provides military assistance and training to the dissident Somali Democratic Salvation Front (SDSF), which is

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based in Ethiopia. The Libyans also provide financial and military assistance to the group. As a result, the SDSF is conducting increasingly bold raids against Somali military and police facilities near the frontier. The SDSF itself does not have the capability to overthrow Siad because its support within Somalia is limited by its narrow tribal base and its identification with Ethiopia. Nonetheless, the SDSF attacks highlight the weaknesses of the Somali military and its embarrassing inability to defend the country. This, in turn, increases the likelihood of a challenge to Siad from within his own military. [redacted]

The Army

DIA 25X1 [redacted] the ability of the Somali Army to perform its missions is weakened by two interrelated problems--poor troop motivation and equipment deficiencies. Morale problems are especially serious among Somali troops in the border area. For the past four years these forces have been subjected to the stresses of combat or a high alert status. In addition, the steady stream of false alarms over pending Ethiopian attacks have caused some units to become lax in performing their duties, and periodic problems with pay, promotions, and other personnel matters have precipitated local mutinies. [redacted]

The military's effectiveness also has been undermined by disturbances in the north caused by the dominant Issak tribe's growing unhappiness with Siad's discriminatory tribal policies. This unrest has sparked some mutinies and the defection of up to several hundred Issak officers and enlisted men. Siad has had little success in bringing the situation under control. [redacted]

The Army is faced with serious maintenance and mobility difficulties. The Soviet advisers taught the Somalis how to operate their equipment but performed almost all the repair work themselves. As a result, Somali technicians know little about preventive maintenance or major repair work, resulting in a steady decline in equipment operability. The military has resorted to hiring foreign technicians to perform these functions, but some have not been paid and have left. [redacted]

The Army's lack of mobility hinders its efforts to counter raids by Somali dissidents, to patrol along the border, and to conduct reconnaissance missions inside Ethiopia. Many Army trucks and other support vehicles are inoperable and Italian supplied armored personnel carriers are also beginning to experience maintenance problems. As a result, the Army often fails to respond quickly to attacks on isolated outposts,

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25X1 allowing the guerrillas to withdraw before Somali reinforcements arrive. [redacted]

The Air Force

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[redacted] the Somali Air Force lacks the capability to perform its two primary missions--defense against Ethiopian air attacks and the provision of close air support for the Army. The weakness is the result of inferior aircraft and the lack of trained pilots and maintenance technicians. [redacted]

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The major problem is the lack of interceptor aircraft capable of matching the relatively sophisticated MIG-21s and MIG-23s in the Ethiopian inventory.

- Mogadishu's MIG-17s are obsolete and suffer from engine wear and a lack of spare parts.
- Somalia's MIG-21s, which are older and less sophisticated than the MIG-21 models possessed by Ethiopia, are from five to ten years old. Few of them are flyable and even these are nearing the end of their engine lives.
- The Chinese-produced F-6s (MIG-19s) also are inferior to Ethiopian aircraft. They are limited to ground support missions because they lack the air-to-air missiles necessary to be effective as interceptors. Although most of the F-6s are operational, the Air Force has few qualified pilots for them. [redacted]

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Somalia suffers from a general lack of qualified pilots. Many of its skilled personnel were killed during the 1977-78 war and few of the remaining aircrews have flown combat missions. This contrasts with Ethiopian pilots who fly extensive combat missions in Eritrea Province and the Ogaden Region. Somali pilots also suffer from a lack of flying time due to fuel shortages and maintenance problems that periodically ground many of their aircraft. [redacted]

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[redacted] the Chinese have been consistently frustrated in their dealings with the Somali Air Force. Over half of the Somali F-6 pilot trainees have been dropped from the program because of poor qualifications or ineptness. Fuel and munition shortages have generally prevented the Chinese from conducting more than basic flight training.

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They also have complained about the poor attitudes of the Somali technicians who are to maintain the F-6s after the Chinese leave. [redacted]

Only minimal maintenance is performed on Somali aircraft because of a shortage of spare parts. Somali technicians, with Egyptian assistance, have proven adept at cannibalization in an effort to keep the MIG-17s and MIG-21s flying, but they lack the ability to perform major engine work. [redacted]

Air Defense

The Somali Surface-to-Air Missile (SAM) and Anti-Aircraft (AAA) systems are generally ineffective and their operational readiness is marginal to poor. Their capabilities are hindered by a shortage of spare parts, the poor condition of the equipment, limited training opportunities, a lack of preventive maintenance, and poor communications. The weaknesses are so extensive that it would take a major overhaul of the entire system and significant outside assistance to make it effective. [redacted]

Somalia's early warning radar network, designed to alert the country to a pending Ethiopian air attack, is of little value. The radars--which were provided by the Soviet Union--are in poor condition, suffering from a shortage of spare parts and poor maintenance. Many of them are functional for only a few hours a day. [redacted]

[redacted] the air defense forces suffer from a poor communications system. Many of the Soviet manufactured radios have broken down. As a result, even if an air attack were detected, the radar site would be unable to provide timely warning to the Air Force or air defense positions. The communications problem also hinders defensive coordination between sites. [redacted]

The SAM system, which is designed to defend Somalia's major population centers and air bases, provides little deterrence to an air attack. The radars that support the SA-2 and SA-3 systems no longer function because of inadequate maintenance and a lack of spare parts. The liquid fuel SA-2 missiles are probably not operational because of these problems, although the SA-3 system appears to be in better shape because its solid fuel missile is easier to maintain. [redacted]

The AAA system, which consists primarily of 37mm guns and smaller-caliber artillery, is incapable of sustained operations. The air defense crews are well disciplined and

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trained in drill procedures and simple engagement techniques, but their equipment suffers from poor maintenance and prolonged exposure to the elements. In addition, the crews have little experience in firing live rounds because of the ammunition shortage. These forces were ineffective during the Ogaden conflict in 1977 and while supporting Somali Army incursions into the Ogaden in 1978-80. [redacted]

The Navy

The Navy is accorded the lowest priority of Somalia's military services. Mogadishu realizes that in the event of open hostilities with Ethiopia the Navy's contribution would be minimal. Its participation in the Ogaden War, for example, consisted of logistical support to Somali forces in the northern part of the country. As a result, it has received little attention in recent years. [redacted]

Because of this neglect, the Somali Navy is unable effectively to perform its missions, such as coastal surveillance and defense, cargo lift, and mine countermeasures. The OSA missile boats, for example, the most sophisticated craft in the Navy's inventory, have frequent engine problems and rarely venture out of the port of Berbera. In addition, the inability of the Somali Air Force to provide air cover would prevent the Somali Navy from operating against the naval forces of Ethiopia and South Yemen, its potential opponents. [redacted]

Like the other services, the Somali Navy has serious maintenance problems. The Soviets provided all of Somalia's naval craft, and almost all maintenance was performed by Soviet advisers prior to their expulsion in 1977. Since then, the Navy's ability to maintain its equipment has been limited by inadequate spare parts and support facilities. Egypt has provided limited amounts of spare parts and maintenance assistance, but Cairo terminated the arrangement because of Somalia's inability to pay. Romania provides some training for a small number of Somali naval students. [redacted]

Implications for the US

US interest in Somalia is based on the agreement signed in 1980 permitting US access to Somali air and naval facilities. Siad will continue his attempts to build on that US interest, to become closely identified with the United States and to make Somalia more important to Washington's defense plans in the region. Siad will use his ties to the US and his general support for Western policies to appeal for significant military assistance. [redacted]

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The basic problems that have prevented a more extensive US-Somali arms supply relationship are not likely to change. These include:

- Mogadishu's refusal to renounce its irredentist claims on Djibouti, Kenya, and Ethiopia.
- Somalia's continued support to the insurgents operating in Ethiopia's Ogaden Region.
- The massive financial cost of rebuilding Somalia's military capabilities.
- Mogadishu's inability to pay for major arms purchases. [redacted]

Siad's failure to strengthen the country's military has led to a growing frustration in the armed forces and may be encouraging some coup plotting among senior officers. This will make Somalia a regional ally of questionable stability for the foreseeable future. [redacted] some Somali officers believe that the West's refusal to provide more than limited defensive arms stems from a distrust of Siad. Siad's refusal to initiate major economic and political reforms, [redacted] is the reason. Siad is increasingly seen by these military leaders as the source of Somalia's problems. If the situation in Somalia continues to decline, these factions are likely to move to oust Siad. [redacted]

A successor regime probably would continue the country's pro-Western policies in the short term. Most Somali military officers support the idea of looking to the US for help, and the country's perennial hostility toward Ethiopia limits chances for an early rapprochement with Ethiopia's Soviet patron. The new leadership would expect the US and its allies to be more generous with military aid, however, and if this did not occur the Somali Government over time probably would attempt a rapprochement with the Soviet Union. Such a policy shift would jeopardize the US position in Somalia and US access to Somali facilities. [redacted]

Any substantial increase in Western military aid to Somalia would pose problems for Washington and regional nations. Despite a recent thaw in Kenyan-Somali relations, Nairobi still fears any improvement in Somalia's military capabilities and would press the US for increased assistance. Nairobi also could threaten to restrict US access to its air and naval facilities in an effort to discourage the United States from rearming Somalia. Ethiopia, for its part would respond to increased US aid to Somalia by

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moving still closer to the Soviet Union and Cuba. Addis Ababa would probably also increase its efforts to topple Siad before he makes any significant improvement in his military posture. [redacted] 25X1

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A revitalized Somali military almost certainly would become more aggressive on the Ogaden issue, viewing Western assistance as both a military and political commitment. The military is a major supporter of Somali irredentism, and if it were strengthened would seek once again to support guerrilla operations and use its own regular forces in the Ogaden to keep Ethiopia away from the Somali border. In such a situation the United States and its allies would find themselves open to charges of supporting Somali military adventures in the region.

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Somali Ground Order of Battle

Personnel: 50,000

Major Equipment:

Tanks: 162 Total

	<u>Inventory</u>	<u>Source</u>	<u>Remarks</u>
T-34	39	(USSR and Egypt)	
T-54/55	72	(USSR and Egypt)	
CENTURION	40	(Kuwait)	
M-41	11	(US)	Captured from Ethiopia
Armored Personnel Carriers: 391			
Fiat 6614/16	270	(Italy)	
BTR-152	100	(USSR)	May not be operational
BTR-60	10	(USSR)	May not be operational
M-113	11	(US)	Captured from Ethiopia
Artillery/Rocket Launchers: 400			
Anti-Tank			
106 mm Recoilless Rifle	200	Pakistan	
MILAN Launcher	95	France	
STRIM Launcher	Unknown	France	

Somali Air Force

Personnel: 1000
Equipment:

<u>Fighter</u>	<u>Possess</u>	<u>Operational</u>	<u>Pilots</u>
F-6 (Chinese Mig-19)	29	25	15
MIG-21	11	4	9
MIG-17/15	13	7	6
<u>Transport</u>			
G-222	2	1	10
AN-24	2	0	
AN-26	2	0	

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Somali Navy

Personnel: 2,860

Equipment:

	<u>Possess</u>	<u>Operational</u>
OSA-II Missile Attack Boat (PTG)	2	2
MOL Torpedo Boat (PTF)	2	2
P-6 Torpedo Boat (PTF)	4	1
MOL Patrol Boat	2	2
POLUCHAT-1 Patrol Craft	5	0
*POLNOCNY Landing Craft (LSM)	1	0
T-4 Landing Craft	4	4
NYRYAT II Diving Tender	1	1

*In Egypt for repair.

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Ethiopia-Somalia: Order of Battle Comparison

	<u>Somalia</u>	<u>Ethiopia</u>
Army		
Personnel	50,000 ^a	250,000 ^a -260,000 ^a
Tanks	160	525-625 ^b
Artillery	412	500-600 ^b
Mortars	455	1100-1300
Air Defense guns	290	500-550 ^b
Armored vehicles	390	500-600 ^b
SAM Battalions	10	7
Navy		
Personnel	2860	3500
Missile Attack boats	2	4
Patrol Boats	5	14
Air Force		
Personnel	1000	3500-4000
Jet fighters	50	112
Reconnaissance	-	12
Helicopters	-	45 ^c
Transports	9	30

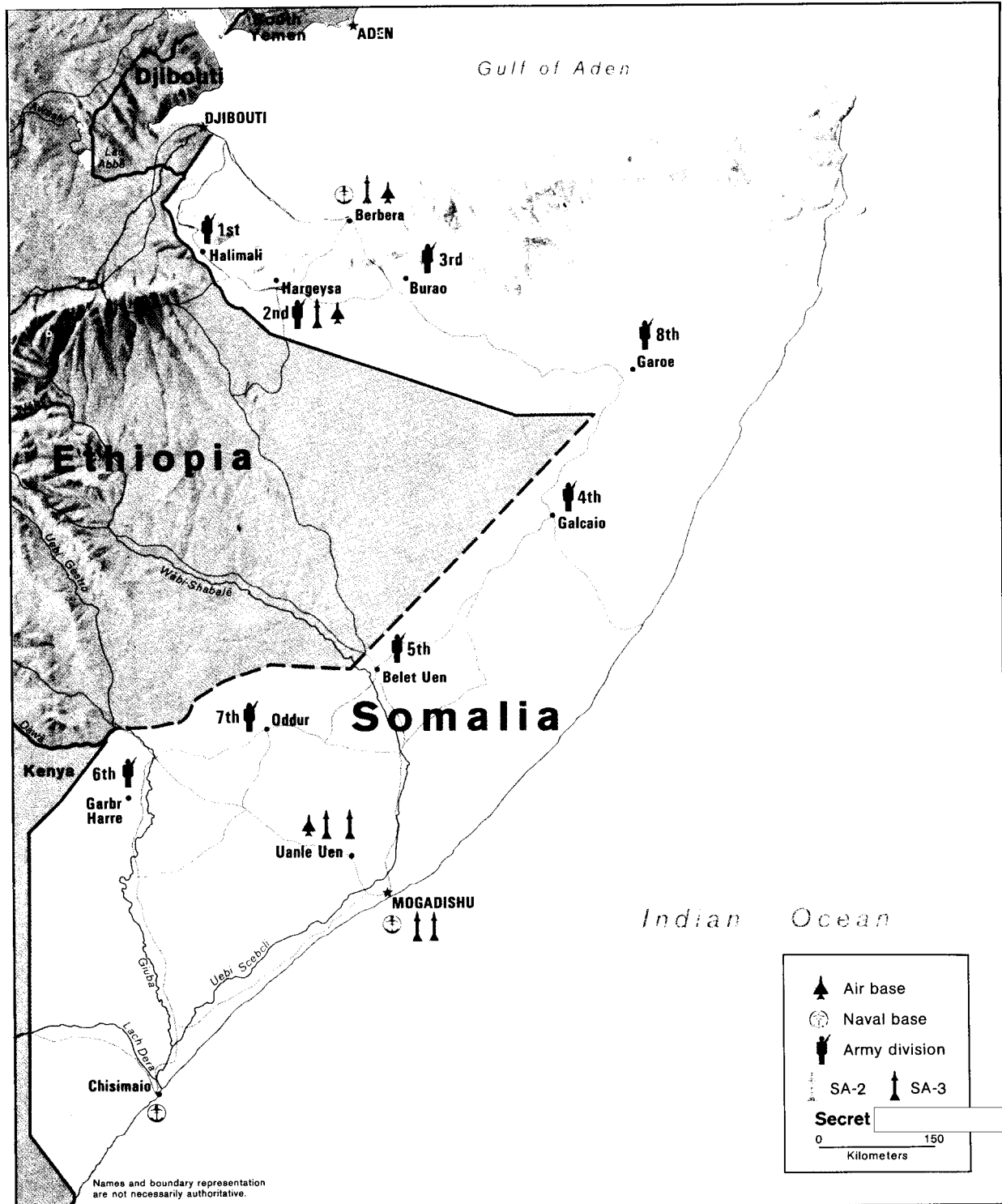
^aTotal includes personnel from Air Defense Command subordinate to Army Headquarters.

^bFigures exclude some 200 tanks, about 135 field artillery pieces, nearly 200 armored vehicles and some 40 air defense guns purchased by the Ethiopians from the Soviet Union but assigned to Cuban forces.

^cFigure includes air rescue, transport, and assault helicopters.

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Somali Order of Battle



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