

CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY
NATIONAL FOREIGN ASSESSMENT CENTER
May 9, 1978

Intelligence Memorandum

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Somalia and Insurgency in the Ogaden

There is a growing body of evidence that the Somalis are stepping up their support for the insurgents and are re-establishing the close command and support relationships that existed prior to the Somali evacuation of the Ogaden. Moreover, over the past few weeks, insurgent activity in the Ogaden has again begun to look as if it is an organized campaign rather than a series of isolated attacks.

- The Somalis have reopened at least one major insurgent base camp in southern Somalia which was closed last fall during the Ogaden conflict.
- [REDACTED] insurgent groups may be going into Bale Province, still with Somali officers in command as they have been in the past.
- There is also fragmentary evidence that the Somali military may be transferring insurgent units pressed into the regular army last year back to guerrilla command.
- A Somali general has taken command of guerrilla operations.
- Mogadiscio is trying to improve communications links with the guerrillas.
- Some arms and material support is being provided by Somalia to the insurgents, but this is limited by shortages in the Somali units themselves.

Evidence from the Ethiopian side indicates a persisting, significant level of insurgent activity. The Ethiopians have mounted counterinsurgency sweeps in the Ogaden and in Bale and Sidamo provinces; they have also flown occasional retaliatory air strikes against targets inside Somalia.

- [REDACTED] planners in Addis Ababa now believe that it may take up to two years

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to defeat the guerrillas and restore government authority in the Ogaden.

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— [REDACTED] logistic problems -- particularly a shortage of transport and water tankers -- in the Ogaden are so great that Ethiopian ground forces are currently incapable of undertaking a campaign against Somalia, as the Ethiopians have threatened to do if the Somalis continue to support the guerrillas.

Siad appears to be trying to have it both ways: supporting and encouraging insurgent activity in the Ogaden while attempting to satisfy foreign critics of Somali irredentism by declaring his inability to control the guerrillas.

- Siad may feel that since guerrilla activity is the only lever he has to use against Ethiopia, he must use it as he can.
- The Somalis' pride and their desire to show continued opposition to Ethiopian control of the Ogaden undoubtedly has weighed in Siad's attitudes, but domestic political considerations also influence his actions. Siad has survived a coup and faces military and popular unrest in the north. He probably fears more trouble if he disavows the guerrilla cause, and he probably could not force the guerrillas to disband even if he wanted to.
- Ethiopia's failure to consolidate security in many parts of the Ogaden has also encouraged the Somalis to believe that they can keep up sizeable guerrilla activity.

In continuing to support the insurgents, Siad may be repeating some of the same miscalculations that led to defeat in the Ogaden last March.

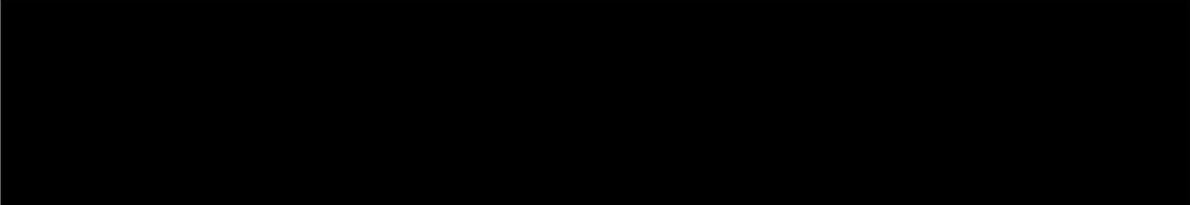
- The guerrillas can be a nuisance to Addis Ababa, but they will be unable to gain control of the Ogaden by military activity or even to pose enough of a threat to force Ethiopia to make concessions to the Somali inhabitants. Siad's actions could serve, however, as an indirect assist to the Eritrean insurgents.

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— Guerrilla operations in the Ogaden risk provoking Ethiopian retaliation, including air strikes, against Somalia proper, which the Somalis would be ill-prepared to repel, especially if the Ethiopians again had Cuban support.



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