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## Ethiopia: The Impact of Soviet Military Assistance

A Research Paper

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# Ethiopia: The Impact of Soviet Military Assistance

A Research Paper

This paper was prepared by \_\_\_\_\_, Office of  
African and Latin American Analysis, and  
\_\_\_\_\_, formerly ALA. Comments and queries  
are welcome and may be addressed to  
\_\_\_\_\_, ALA

This paper was coordinated with the Directorate of  
Operations and the National Intelligence Council.

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## Ethiopia: The Impact of Soviet Military Assistance

**Key Judgments**  
*Information available  
as of January 1983  
was used in this report.*

We believe the six-year-old military relationship between the USSR and Ethiopia—the keystone of close ties between Moscow and Addis Ababa—is based on major complementary interests and is likely to endure for some time. The Soviets have lavished military aid on Addis Ababa in an effort to expand their influence in the Horn of Africa and gain access to Ethiopian facilities. For its part, the Mengistu regime regards the USSR as the only available source of large-scale military assistance needed to withstand threats from internal separatism and Somali irredentism—factors that we believe are likely to persist for some time.

Since 1975 the Soviets have provided more military equipment and advisers to Ethiopia than to any other Sub-Saharan African country. [ we estimate they have delivered about \$2.6 billion of the \$4 billion in assistance that they have agreed to provide—including provision of 1,700 military advisers—and have equipped the Cuban combat brigades that form a strategic reserve to assist Ethiopian forces in repelling another Somali invasion

In return for its aid, Moscow has achieved substantial influence with the dominant state in the Horn of Africa and has gained access to air facilities in Eritrea Province and a small naval facility off the Eritrean coast. In our judgment, Soviet influence in Ethiopia also gives Moscow a basis from which to work against Western interests in the region.

With Soviet and, to a lesser extent, Cuban assistance, Mengistu has enlarged and modernized the Ethiopian armed forces. We assess the approximately 210,000-man military as the largest and best equipped in black Africa and more than twice the size of the combined forces of Somalia and Sudan, both viewed as threats by Ethiopia. Although military assistance has improved Ethiopia's capability to defend its territory from conventional attack, we believe it has not given government forces the ability to overwhelm secessionists in Ethiopia's northern provinces or to conduct sustained, large-scale offensive actions beyond their own borders. Addis Ababa has demonstrated the ability to conduct smaller operations—such as the recent incursions into Somalia—without outside assistance.

The Ethiopians [ regard the Soviet assistance programs as a collection of stopgap measures which, although designed to meet immediate needs, are insufficient in concept and execution. We believe this perception is correct and that Moscow's design is to ensure continued Ethiopian dependence on Soviet military assistance.

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The character of Soviet military assistance to Ethiopia is unlikely, in our judgment, to change substantially over the next few years, although the overall quantity of arms delivered should diminish. For example, the most recently signed agreement—

—entails annual support at a rate about one-third lower than during 1976-80. Current deliveries are intended primarily to compensate for combat losses—especially in Eritrea—and for breakdowns due to heavy field operations or to poor maintenance procedures. We believe Addis Ababa is not likely to receive large amounts of sophisticated equipment over the next few years because of the military's shortage of skilled manpower to operate effectively what it now possesses

—Addis Ababa is deeply in debt to Moscow for its military aid. We presume that payments of approximately due in both 1981 and 1982 were made, but by 1984 payments will increase to over per year. The magnitude of the Ethiopian debt gives the Soviet Union leverage to press Addis Ababa for political and military concessions, such as the establishment of an Ethiopian Marxist party or access to additional military facilities. Ethiopian Chairman Mengistu believes that Moscow ultimately will have to accept Ethiopia's inability to pay. We believe Moscow will extract some political concessions in return for accepting partial payment and reducing the economic burden.

We judge that Addis Ababa will continue to rely on Soviet military assistance to modernize its forces. Despite Ethiopian dissatisfaction with features of the Soviet military assistance program, the Ethiopians recognize that Moscow is their only source of large amounts of equipment. In our judgment, Addis Ababa would have to shift its political and diplomatic stance drastically or acquire significant new financial resources to obtain arms from European or other sources. We believe both contingencies are unlikely. We further believe that Ethiopian concern over the growing US involvement in Sudan and Somalia, the continuing insurgencies in Eritrea and Tigray Provinces, and Mengistu's political dependence on his Soviet-backed military for his domestic survival will continue to bind the regime to Moscow

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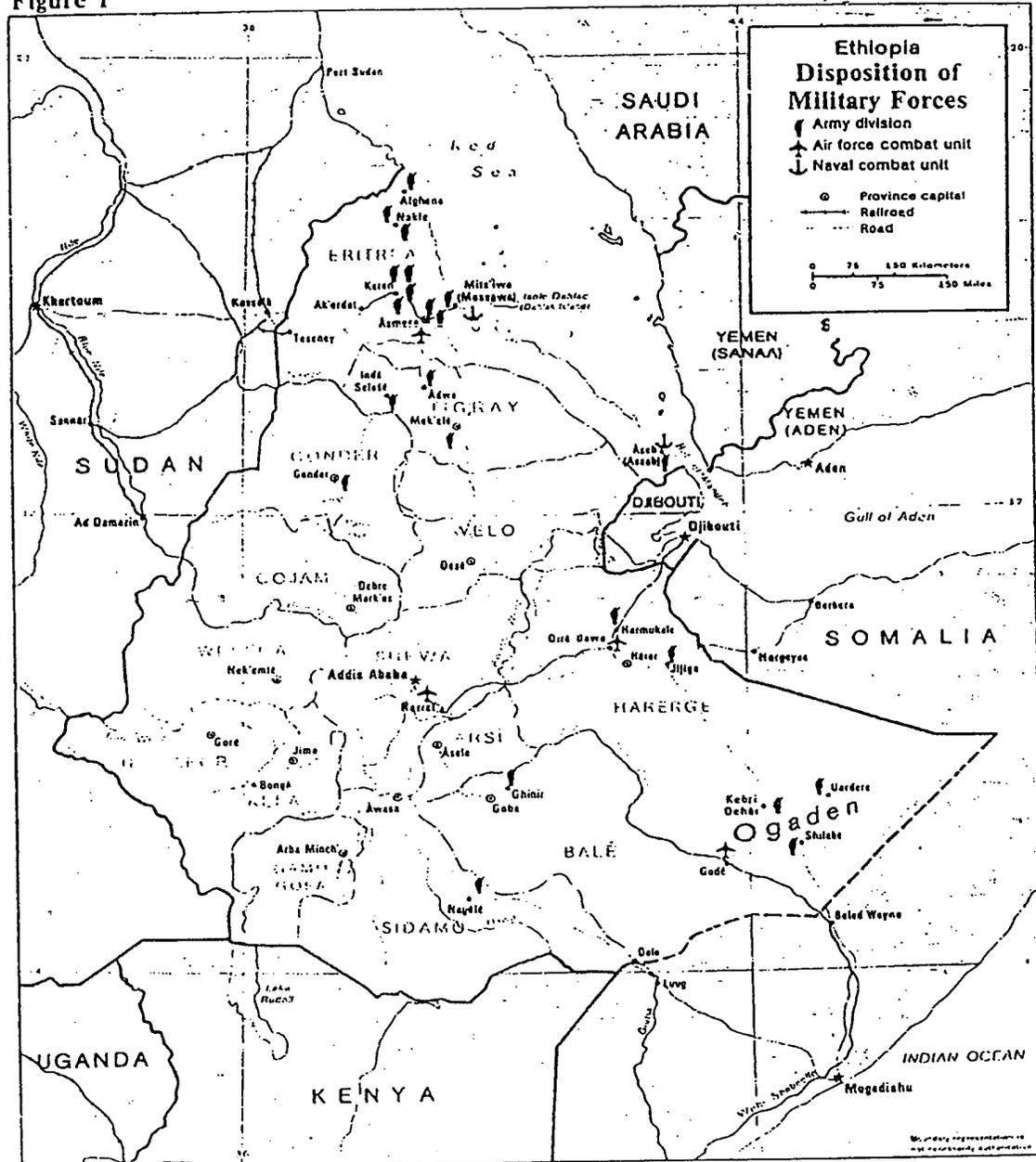
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Figure 1



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## Ethiopia: The Impact of Soviet Military Assistance

### The Origin and Nature of Soviet Involvement

Moscow has long considered Ethiopia a key African state because of its proximity to the Red Sea, Indian Ocean, and Arabian Peninsula and its position as the dominant regional power. Efforts to establish close ties with Addis Ababa date back to the early 19th century and have been pursued by successive governments in Moscow. In 1976 the Soviets took advantage of growing strains between Addis Ababa and Washington, its traditional arms supplier, by moving closer to the Ethiopian military regime that came to power after the overthrow of Emperor Haile Selassie in 1974. Although the move prompted a resentful Somalia to sever ties with its longtime Soviet benefactors, the Soviets saw an overriding opportunity to accelerate the reduction of the US presence in Ethiopia and acquire a better position from which to extend their influence in the region.

Ethiopia was responsive to Soviet overtures because of the growing insurgency in Eritrea Province and renewed Somali irredentist activity—highlighted by the expanded operations of Somali-supported guerrillas in the Ogaden region. Addis Ababa's unsuccessful attempts to obtain increased amounts of military aid from the United States led to the signing of an arms agreement with Moscow in December 1976 and a rapid decline in Washington's position. The Soviet response to Ethiopia's plea for massive arms assistance after the Somali invasion in July 1977—although belated—cemented the ties between the two countries. In addition to arms deliveries to Ethiopian forces, the Soviets provided equipment and transportation for Cuban troops dispatched to help Ethiopia repel the Somalis. (See appendix A for more details.)

We find that Soviet perceptions of the strategic importance of Ethiopia are reflected in Moscow's provision of more military equipment and advisers to Ethiopia than to any other country in Sub-Saharan Africa. Analysis [ ]

[ ] leads us to believe that Moscow's military assistance to Ethiopia since 1975 has amounted to about \$2.6 billion in equipment deliveries and services. The Soviets delivered the bulk of the equipment in a massive seafast and airlift during the 1977-78 Ogaden war (see table 1).

Soviet support has enabled the Mengistu regime to expand and equip its military, which now numbers between 200,000 and 210,000 men and is the largest in black Africa. Soviet aid has permitted the Ethiopians to control an insurgency in the northern province of Eritrea as well as Somali-supported guerrillas in the Ogaden region. In our judgment, Addis Ababa also believes it needs a strong military to defend Ethiopian territory against another Somali invasion—there have been several such attempts by Somalia in the past 20 years to press its irredentist claim to the Ogaden—and to keep up military pressure on Somalia with border incursions and occasional air attacks.

We believe that Mengistu is partly reassured about his occasionally disappointing relationship with Moscow by a view that Marxism provides a political structure and ideology that he can use to fulfill Ethiopia's long-sought goal of uniting its disparate population under a centralized government. Thus, while tensions between Ethiopia and the Soviet Union exist over several issues, including quality of equipment and repayment terms, we believe that ties will continue as long as the Addis Ababa government regards itself threatened.

In return for its assistance, Moscow has gained military advantages in support of its Red Sea and Indian Ocean operations. Soviet naval ships have access to a small naval facility on Dahlak Island and occasionally visit the Eritrean ports of Massawa and Assab. In addition, Soviet IL-38 antisubmarine and

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Table 1  
Soviet Military Deliveries of Major Equipment  
to Ethiopia

Units

	1977	1978	1979	1980	1981	1982 (Jan- Nov)	Total
<b>Ground Force*</b>							CR4*
Tanks (T-54/55)							905
Artillery (76-mm, 85-mm, and 130-mm guns; 122-mm howitzers and rocket launchers)							886
Mortars (82-mm, 120-mm)							865
Armored vehicles (BTR-60, BTR-152, BMP-1, BRDM-2)							767
Air defense guns (23-mm, 37-mm, 57-mm, 100-mm)							125
SAM launchers (SA-7)							51
Helicopters (MI-8, MI-24)							148
<b>Air Force</b>							13
Combat aircraft (MIG-15/17, MIG-21, MIG-23)							4
Transports (AN-12, YAK-40)							5
<b>Navy</b>							4
Missile attack boats (Osa-II-class)							5
Torpedo boats (MOL-class)							4
Landing craft (T-4s, Polnocny LSM)							24
<b>Air Defense Command</b>							21
SA-2 launchers (four sites)							21
SA-3 launchers (three sites)							

\* Equipment delivered during the massive Soviet airlift and seallift, undertaken between November 1977 and May 1978, included weapon systems for [ ]

\* Total does not include some 70 Soviet-made T-34 tanks that came from South Yemen.  
\* Three additional launchers were reportedly received in 1978 but have not been observed at any operational site.

[ ] purchased by the Ethiopians are believed to have been assigned to the four Cuban combat brigades.

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naval reconnaissance aircraft operate in the Red Sea and Indian Ocean from the airfield at Asmara. The Soviets might use their leverage to press Addis Ababa for access to additional Ethiopian military facilities, but we doubt they would reduce significantly their military aid if the Ethiopians did not respond satisfactorily on this point.

We believe that more important than military access, from the Soviet point of view, is the influence its military aid has won it in Ethiopia, which is the dominant country in the Horn of Africa and a major

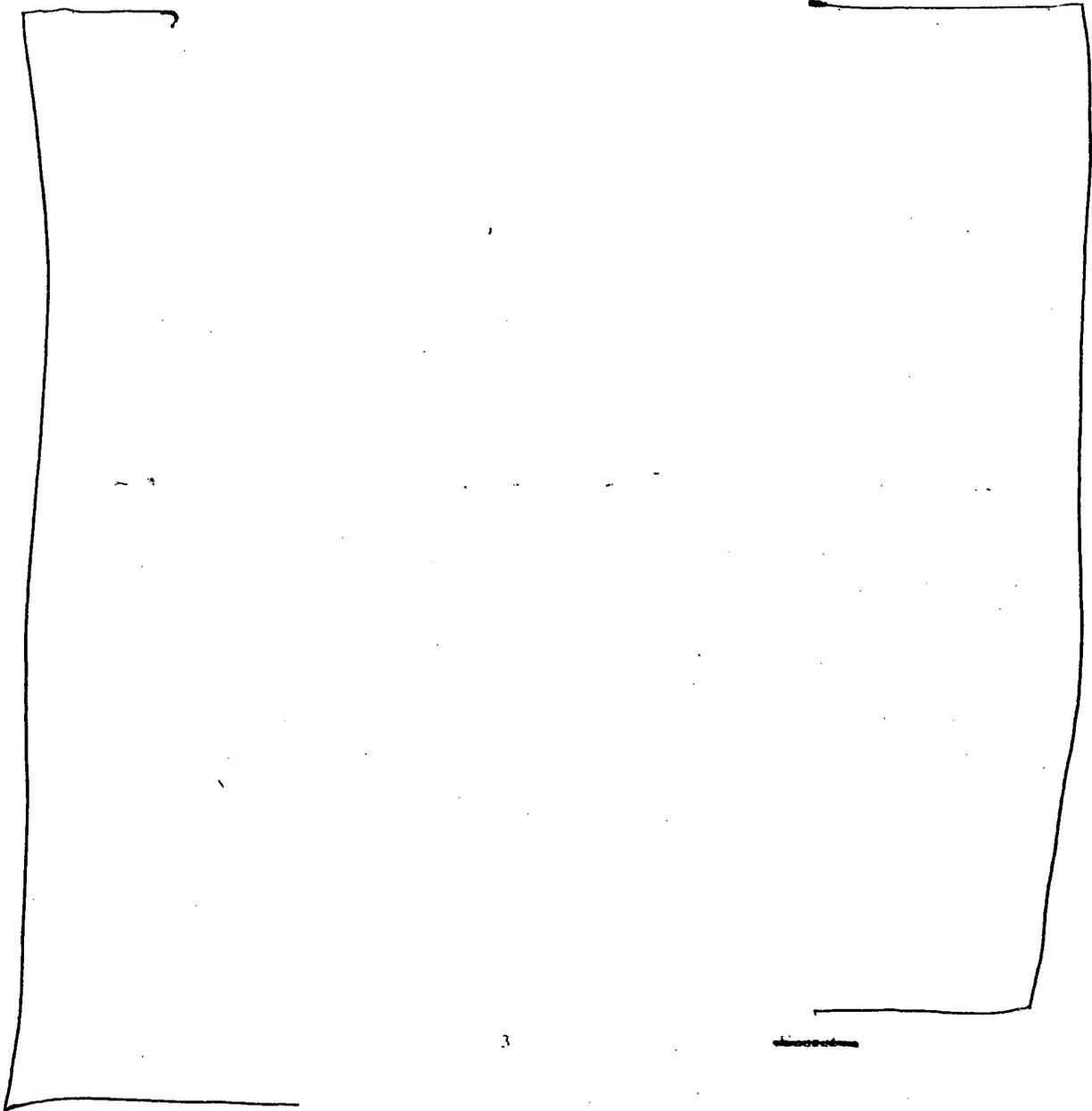
African power. The Soviets will attempt to consolidate their position there and use it to continue building influence and opposing Western interests in the region

Moscow views political stability in Ethiopia as important for the success of its policies in the region. It probably believes that, while Mengistu does not always do the Soviet bidding, he is the only identifiable

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Figure 2  
Soviet Naval Support Facility, Dahlak Island, Ethiopia



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person capable of providing stability to the country. We judge that Moscow will attempt to use its provision of arms assistance to encourage the creation of other centers of power, such as a formal Marxist political party that would be even more receptive to its urgings than the present military leadership. We believe, however, that the Soviets will continue to move cautiously in this area out of concern over jeopardizing their present stake in Ethiopia.

#### The Soviet Military Assistance Program

↳ Moscow's military assistance program in Ethiopia was established through a series of agreements

In our opinion, the Soviet arms sale relationship with Ethiopia has many other built-in mechanisms for reinforcing dependency.↳

↳ that key military items, such as ship engines, are to be overhauled in the Soviet Union rather than in Ethiopia, where work might be done more cheaply and quickly. Moscow also requires that aviation fuel and lubricants used on Soviet-supplied aircraft be purchased from the Soviet Union. Indeed, according to oil industry sources, in recent years Addis Ababa has become committed to purchasing all its petroleum from Moscow.↳ the Soviets also ignore Ethiopian requests to upgrade indigenous maintenance facilities and improve the training of Ethiopian maintenance personnel.

↳

Indeed, Ethiopia complains that Soviet repayment requirements do not take into account Ethiopian poverty and the financial drain of the military situation in Eritrea and Ogaden.↳

↳ that Addis Ababa has had to pay only a small portion-↳ however,↳

Although the agreements are generous to Ethiopia in terms of the equipment provided, the Ethiopians are highly dependent on Moscow, particularly for maintenance, overhaul, and spare parts.↳

↳ the Ethiopians resent the fact that Soviet aid often has consisted of reconditioned equipment that requires frequent maintenance. In addition,↳ report that Soviet shipments of essential support items frequently have been late or incomplete. We believe that such shortfalls are to some extent intentional, designed to foster Ethiopian dependency and thus provide the Soviets with leverage over their client.↳

↳ We believe Moscow ultimately will reluctantly settle for only a portion of the↳ annual payment.↳ but even this will place a further strain on Addis Ababa's already precarious foreign exchange

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position. [

As a result, we believe Ethiopia's resentment of tough bargaining by the Soviets is likely to be an increasingly troublesome element in its relations with Moscow. ]

**The Soviet Military Advisory Group**

The Soviet Military Assistance Group (MAG) in Ethiopia, established in 1977, now numbers an estimated 1,700 advisers. [

2 Addis Ababa eventually wants to reduce the Soviet presence because of the financial burden and the continuing friction between Soviet advisers and Ethiopian officers. We believe, however, that the need to maintain a large military force and relatively sophisticated equipment precludes such a move.

**Size and Responsibilities.** [

2 we judge that the Soviet advisers currently in Ethiopia are responsible for providing:

- Advice to senior Ethiopian military officers on planning and conducting major combat operations and administrative undertakings.
- Technical and logistic support for complex weapons systems.
- Basic training for recruits, specialized training for pilots and weapon system technicians, and combat training for brigade- and division-level units.
- Political indoctrination for Ethiopian military personnel

**Organization.** In our judgment, the Soviets have organized their advisory group to parallel the structure of the Ethiopian armed forces, thereby ensuring Soviet involvement in almost every facet and activity of the Ethiopian military. The advisory group is currently headed by Lieutenant General Demin, who resides in Addis Ababa with his staff. By virtue of his position, we believe General Demin assigns senior Soviet officers to the Ethiopian General Staff, to the commanders and chiefs of staff of each of the military services, and to field commands or operational units in the service:

[ 2 most of the senior Soviet officers and subordinate advisers are assigned to the five Ethiopian ground force commands: the Central Command at Addis Ababa, the Western Command (unlocated), the Eastern Command at Harar, the Southern Command at Awasa, and the Northern Command at Asmara. Soviet combat specialists and political officers also have been identified at the military operations center in Asmara. Under the individual Ethiopian ground force commands, Soviet advisers—combat specialists as well as political officers—are assigned to each of the 22 regular infantry divisions. [

2 there probably are 10 to 15 Soviet advisers with each division headquarters and possibly three or four assigned at brigade level. 2 We believe some battalions may also have Soviet advisers. In addition, Soviet instructor pilots, flight engineers, and armament specialists reportedly are attached to the Army aviation battalion equipped with MI-24 helicopter gunships.

In the other Ethiopian services, [

2 Soviet military officers are assigned primarily as advisers to command-level personnel and as instructors or weapons specialists at training bases and operational facilities. [ that six or seven Soviets are assigned to Air Force headquarters, but most of the Soviet advisers to the Ethiopian Air Force are involved in MIG-21 and MIG-23 training as well as instruction in aircraft maintenance. Compared to the other forces, the least number of Soviet advisers are assigned to the Ethiopian Air Defense Command—the smallest force in the Ethiopian military

[ 2 as many as seven Soviet advisers are located at naval headquarters. The majority of the Soviet naval advisers are either engineers, gunnery and torpedo instructors, or weapons technicians (such as specialists on Styx missiles) who support Ethiopian naval units and facilities in Massawa and Assab. [

<sup>2</sup> Ethiopian infantry divisions consist of four infantry brigades, an artillery battalion, a tank battalion, an antiaircraft unit, and various specialized units.

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### Activities. [

] since their deployment to Ethiopia, Soviet advisers have provided two vital services: direct combat support for Ethiopian ground force operations against insurgents in the Ogaden, Tigray, and Eritrea; and rear services support [

] the Soviets have played a lesser role in the instruction of Ethiopian military personnel, particularly recruits, pilots, and weapons technicians.

Soviet advisers have heavily influenced Ethiopian ground force operations in Eritrea [

] high-level Soviet personnel as well as advisers at the division and brigade levels have participated extensively in the planning and execution of military operations. During the campaigns against Eritrean insurgents in 1978 and 1979, Soviet General Chaplygin ordered Ethiopian commanders to comply with certain broad directives—instructions relating to tactical intelligence—in conducting offensive operations. Such orders were executed with the help of Soviet advisers at lower echelons who helped plan and position combat and combat support units prior to an attack [

] during the unsuccessful Eritrean campaign in 1982, the commander of Soviet Ground Forces, General Petrov, spent several weeks in Ethiopia, presumably advising the government in its combat operations. [

] we believe Soviet ~~ARTISANS~~ **ARTISANS** are now being conducted in Tigray Province against an increasingly active insurgency. In addition, we believe the Soviets are performing some maintenance and advisory functions for the Ethiopian forces engaged both in fighting Somali-supported guerrillas in the Ogaden region and in border skirmishes with Somalia [

] Soviet military personnel assigned to units and training facilities avoid their role as instructors and perform the tasks at hand (for example, repairing weapons systems) themselves. This appears to be the normal procedure for Soviet advisers, who probably find it easier to do the work themselves than train local personnel. [

] the Ethiopians ~~resent~~ **resent** their Soviet instructors' arrogance and lack of interest in developing indigenous capabilities [

### The Impact of Soviet Involvement on the Ethiopian Military

We believe Mengistu's objective in seeking Soviet military assistance was to build a large, modern, and efficient military organization that could subdue secessionist groups and defend against Somali forces. With Soviet military aid and Cuban assistance, he has had some success in meeting these objectives, particularly in improving Ethiopia's ability to defend its borders against conventional military attack. We believe, however, that this has not enabled Mengistu to create a force capable of suppressing the insurgents in Ethiopia's northern provinces or conducting sustained division-sized offensive actions beyond its own borders. Moreover, the operational capabilities of most components of Ethiopia's armed forces are heavily dependent on Soviet expertise [

Despite its continued dependence on the Soviets, the Ethiopian military is radically improved from 1976, when it showed all the effects of having been weakened by combat losses and a series of government purges and power struggles after the overthrow of Haile Selassie in 1974. In what follows—and in greater detail in appendix B—we offer some insights on the changes over this period in Ethiopian military capabilities [

#### Force Expansion and Modernization

We find the most marked change in the Ethiopian ground forces, which have expanded from five to 22 divisions. Deliveries of large numbers of Soviet tanks, artillery, and armored personnel carriers enabled the Ethiopians to equip the new divisions and to give them greater firepower and mobility than the armies of neighboring countries. Soviet-supplied MI-24 assault helicopters enabled the Ethiopians to form an Army aviation battalion capable of providing close air support to combat units. The Army's air defense capability, previously limited to small caliber US-supplied weapons, was also substantially improved, in our opinion, with the delivery of SA-7 missiles and several hundred anti-aircraft guns [

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The Ethiopian Air Force has been rebuilt with the delivery of Soviet fighter, trainer, transport, and reconnaissance aircraft. This has given Addis Ababa the largest and most experienced Air Force in black Africa. According to our analysis, its proven air-to-air capability gives it a decided advantage over neighboring Somalia and over Sudan, Ethiopia's other major antagonist. We further believe that the Air Force's extensive air-to-ground experience played key roles in repelling the Somali invasion of 1977, in defeating relatively large-scale Somali Army attacks into the Ogaden in 1980, and in supporting the Ethiopian border incursions into Somalia in 1982.

Soviet deliveries of SAM launchers and associated equipment have enabled the Ethiopians to establish an Air Defense Command.

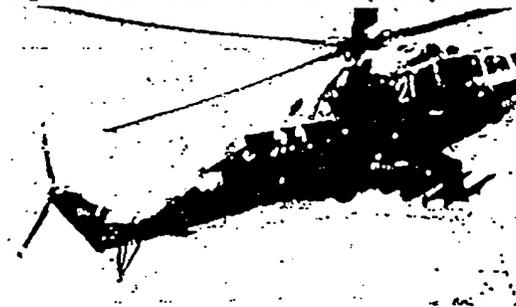
The main commercial and military port at Assab is defended by SA-3s while a mix of SA-2s and SA-3s is used to defend major airfields and military installations in the interior.

The Ethiopian Navy has received the least Soviet attention, and the equipment it has acquired has not had a significant impact on naval capabilities. Four Soviet Osa-class missile attack boats represent the most important addition to the force. These boats, armed with Styx missiles, are more than a match for the two long-neglected Osa boats in the Somali Navy, in our analysis. We believe, however, that maintenance and morale problems, coupled with the length of the Ethiopian coastline, prevent the Navy from fulfilling its primary role of coastal patrol.

**Force Effectiveness and Readiness**

Despite the impressive expansion of the Ethiopian forces and the relative sophistication of the Soviet weapons, we believe Moscow's support has little impact on the problems that seriously limit the effectiveness and readiness of Ethiopian military forces—the lack of trained manpower and poor logistics. Primarily because of these deficiencies, Ethiopia's armed forces are heavily dependent upon the Soviets, particularly in the areas of command and control, combat planning and employment, logistic support, and weapons maintenance.

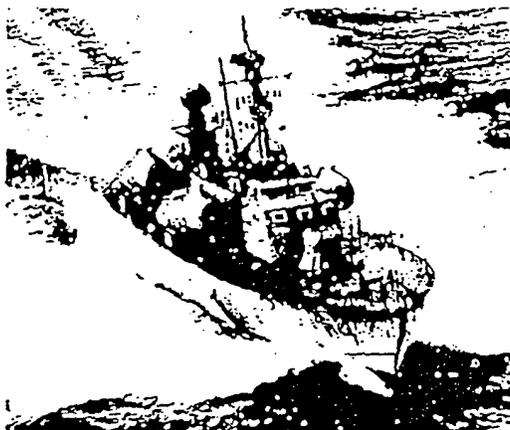
Figure 3. Selected Air and Naval Weapons Systems



MI-24 Hind helicopter gunship



MIG-23 fighter-bomber



Osa-II missile patrol boat

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Figure 4. Ethiopian Ground Forces Equipment



BM-21 multiple rocket launcher



BTR-60 armored personnel carrier

T-55 tank



*Ground Forces.* Manpower and logistic support problems are most apparent in the Ethiopian ground forces. As a result of rapid expansion, large numbers of ground force personnel lack the skills to maintain and operate the Soviet equipment. Qualified personnel, particularly maintenance technicians, are spread so thin that the combat capability of many units is reduced considerably. In addition

there is a shortage of trained and experienced officers in many units, adversely affecting combat performance. Moreover, many officers were commissioned directly from the ranks, often on the basis of political reliability rather than demonstrated competence. This is one reason that Ethiopian commanders are forced to rely on Soviet advisers in the planning and execution of major military operations.

We believe the Army's inefficient supply system necessitates support from the Soviets for extended operations. The longstanding failure of the Army to keep units and supply depots sufficiently stocked with spare parts—for which some of the blame lies with the Soviets—also reduces the capabilities of its units.

*Air Force.* During the 1977-78 Ogaden war, the Air Force, in air-to-air combat, quickly eliminated the Somali Air Force. Since that time, the Air Force has demonstrated some competence in providing close air support to the ground forces fighting insurgents in Eritrea, Tigray, and the Ogaden

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Figure 5  
Major Ethiopian Air Base at Debre Zeit, South of Addis Ababa



Like the other services, however, the Air Force, in our analysis, also has personnel and logistic problems that affect its operational effectiveness, particularly in sustained operations. Although large numbers of Ethiopian pilots are being trained in the Soviet Union, we believe the instruction takes two to three years. As a result, operational units still have only a limited number of qualified MIG-21 and MIG-23 pilots.

Moreover, the shortcomings of Soviet flight training—particularly limited flying time and poor instruction in aerial maneuvers—require the Ethiopian Air Force to provide returning pilots with further ground and flight training.

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The Air Force also has a problem with low operational rates for its aircraft. We believe that less than 50 percent of the country's fighters, transports, or helicopters are usually flyable. This is a result of defective components, Soviet delays in providing spare parts, an inefficient Ethiopian logistic system, and the inability of Soviet or Ethiopian maintenance personnel to make on-the-spot repairs. Many of the repair problems can be attributed to the lack of preventive maintenance. Shortages of Ethiopian personnel and technicians for servicing Soviet-supplied aircraft may account for this

*The Air Defense Command.* The Soviet air defense missiles and radar systems were novel to Ethiopia when they were delivered in the late 1970s. Because of this, we believe Addis Ababa has been almost completely dependent on the Cubans and Soviets for operational and logistic support while Ethiopian crews have been undergoing training. Although small numbers of Ethiopian personnel have begun to assume positions as weapons operators and technicians, the size of the system and the leadtime required to train crews lead us to believe the Air Defense Command still has insufficient qualified Ethiopian personnel to maintain and operate the entire air defense network alone

*Navy* [ the Soviets have provided Ethiopian naval personnel with engineering, navigation, communications, electronics, and missile training in the USSR, but the Navy still has only a limited number of technically trained personnel to maintain the complex Soviet-supplied equipment. [ declining morale among officers and enlisted men has resulted in defections, and we believe continuing morale problems will further reduce the availability of qualified technical personnel [

[ faulty Soviet equipment also has plagued the Navy. For example, engine problems on the Osa missile boats (which were secondhand when delivered) are common. The engines have to be sent to the Soviet Union for repair when spare parts to correct such problems are unavailable. Finally, Ethiopia must rely on the Soviet drydock at Dahlak Island for major maintenance on its craft because it lacks its own facilities

#### Perceptions of the Adequacy of Soviet Assistance

[ suggest there are major differences between the Soviet Union and Ethiopia regarding the nature and impact of Soviet aid [

#### Ethiopian View. [

[ the Ethiopians believe the Soviet aid program is a collection of stopgap measures designed to meet immediate, short-term problems. The Ethiopians would prefer to have a program that would modernize their armed forces on a systematic basis, streamline organizational structures, upgrade training, and expand logistic facilities [

[ that the Ethiopians believe they can absorb more assistance than they are receiving and that the overall effectiveness of the military would improve proportionately if more resources were devoted to these modernization efforts [

[ some Ethiopian leaders are convinced that the Soviet aid program deliberately reinforces Ethiopian dependency, adding to their resentment of the Soviets

*Soviet View.* We believe Moscow dismisses Ethiopian perceptions and criticisms of the Soviet aid program as typical of a Third World client's parochialism, arrogance, and ingratitude. The Soviets probably believe their support to Ethiopia has been generous, particularly in view of the comprehensive aid packages- [ [

[ that have been offered to the Ethiopians. We believe the Soviets also may believe Ethiopia has a limited capacity to absorb large quantities of additional aid. We believe, in fact, that Moscow may regard Ethiopia's military difficulties—as long as they remain manageable—as advantageous to Soviet interests because they ensure Addis Ababa's continuing dependence

#### Outlook and Implication for the US

We believe Addis Ababa almost certainly will continue to rely on Soviet military assistance for the foreseeable future, thus ensuring a continued heavy Soviet

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influence and presence. Despite Ethiopian dissatisfaction with the current level and focus of Soviet military aid, Moscow remains the only source willing and able to sell large amounts of equipment to the Ethiopians on liberal credit terms. In our view, these military needs will be sustained by Ethiopia's inability to solve its major security problems—the insurgencies in Eritrea, Tigray, and the Ogaden—in the near term.

To obtain major weapons from other sources, Addis Ababa, in our judgment, would have to shift its political and diplomatic stance drastically or acquire significant new financial resources. Both developments are unlikely in view of Ethiopia's poor economic prospects and the leadership's commitment to Marxism. In our analysis, based upon Ethiopia's transition from Western to Soviet arms, Ethiopian leaders probably understand that shifting to another supplier would compound their logistic problems by requiring parts and servicing for new equipment while attempting to keep the Soviet equipment operational. We believe Addis Ababa has also learned from this experience that any weakening of its armed forces encourages the secessionist movements and further destabilization efforts by Sudan and Somalia.

We believe the nature of Soviet military advice and assistance to Ethiopia is unlikely to change substantially over the next few years, although the quantities of arms delivered are expected to diminish. Compared to the large-scale Soviet arms deliveries in 1977-78, further shipments of weapons and military equipment are likely to remain modest in the absence of any new and significant threat to Ethiopia security. The delivery of newer, substantially improved weapons is unlikely because of their cost and Ethiopia's already substantial debt to the Soviet Union. The shipments being received are intended primarily to compensate for combat losses and breakdowns as a result of heavy field operations or poor maintenance. Newly delivered equipment also will be used to fill out the specified equipment needs of existing units.

Despite Soviet support, we believe Ethiopian military capabilities probably will not improve appreciably over the next few years. The military will continue to experience a shortage of skilled personnel needed to maintain the country's advanced equipment and to fill

important midlevel officer positions. While the armed forces are slowly developing an ability to contain the various insurgencies, training deficiencies and the government's refusal to make political concessions will, in our view, frustrate efforts to end rebellions at home.

We believe the Ethiopian military will continue to maintain its capabilities against neighboring Somalia and Sudan, despite its overall problems. Clashes along the Somali-Ethiopian frontier will increase as Addis Ababa expands its efforts to eliminate the presence of Somali-supported guerrillas and Somali regular forces in the Ogaden region. The Ethiopian leadership's decision to use direct military force or anti-Siadi Somali dissidents in efforts to topple the Somali Government will result in continued instability in Mogadishu and frequent Somali requests for arms support from the United States and other Western nations. We do not believe the Ethiopians will launch a full-scale invasion of Somalia because of Addis Ababa's logistic problems, the adverse political impact it would have, and Soviet opposition to such a move. The Ethiopians will, however, encourage and support expanded Somali dissident activity and apply direct pressure by occupying additional towns along the frontier.

We believe the Ethiopians will also continue their low-key assistance to Libyan efforts to overthrow Sudanese President Nimeiri. The provision for training facilities and instructors probably will continue. We do not, however, envision Addis Ababa employing its armed forces directly against Sudan out of concern that this would result in unlimited Sudanese assistance to anti-Ethiopian dissidents.

Despite its size and relative sophistication, we believe it is unlikely that the Ethiopian military will engage in any large-scale foreign adventures in Africa. The need for a large standing army to combat internal insurgencies and a recognition of its own military deficiencies place constraints on such activity. The Ethiopians could, however, dispatch advisers if requested or a small number of combat troops to augment forces.

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from other nations. We believe that Ethiopian insistence that the costs for such operations be borne by others would hinder even such limited deployments.

While we believe Ethiopian-Soviet friction will continue over the level, costs, and quality of Moscow's military aid, Ethiopia's concern that the growing US involvement in Sudan and Somalia is directed against it serves to enhance the relationship with Moscow. In the face of the real or perceived threats the Mengistu regime faces, we believe it is unlikely to break with the Soviets or seriously move to lessen its dependence.

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## Appendix A

### The Soviet Move Into Ethiopia

#### Background

During the reign of Emperor Haile Selassie, Ethiopia depended on the United States for its arms and training. Between 1952 and 1977, the United States provided nearly \$310 million worth of military equipment, including aircraft, tanks, and artillery. In addition, approximately 3,900 Ethiopian military personnel were trained in the United States. The US objective was to develop a relatively small (about 45,000 men) but competent conventional force to deal with threats to Haile Selassie's rule posed by a growing secessionist movement in Eritrea Province and the arming of Ethiopia's longtime enemy Somalia by the USSR.

The overthrow of Haile Selassie and his pro-Western government in 1974 and the establishment of a socialist regime in Addis Ababa led to a deterioration in relations between the United States and Ethiopia. Addis Ababa severed the military relationship in April 1977 when the United States refused to supply massive military assistance to cope with the deteriorating insurgent situation and the Somali arms buildup.

#### The Soviet Entry

With the development of strains in the US-Ethiopian relationship, Addis Ababa in 1976 began to respond to Soviet feelers and approached the Soviet Union and several Eastern Bloc countries for weapons. This effort accelerated rapidly after February 1977 when Mengistu Haile-Mariam consolidated his personal control and placed the country firmly in the Marxist camp.

We believe Mengistu turned to the Soviets because of ideological affinity and Moscow's willingness and ability to provide quickly the needed assistance. The Soviet response resulted in a major refocusing of Soviet military assistance and political relations on the Horn of Africa. Until then, the Soviets were Somalia's major arms supplier and had some 1,500 military advisers in Somalia. As part of the Soviet aid package, Somali officers and technicians also were

trained in the USSR. In return, Somali President Siad had granted the Soviets access to Somali military facilities and allowed them to establish a major military base at Berbera.

Moscow's conclusion of an arms agreement with Ethiopia in December 1976 and the subsequent warming of relations between Addis Ababa and Moscow triggered a steady decline in Somali-Soviet relations. Somali President Siad apparently reasoned that a campaign to fulfill the country's irredentist designs on Ethiopia's Ogaden region had to be launched before Soviet arms and training could strengthen the Ethiopian forces, and Somali troops invaded the region in July 1977. Moscow initially hedged on supporting either country but gradually endorsed Addis Ababa. Mogadishu responded in November 1977 by expelling all Soviet personnel and nullifying the Treaty of Friendship and Cooperation, ending 16 years of Soviet military and economic assistance.

After its expulsion from Somalia, Moscow began a massive sealoft and airlift of military equipment to Ethiopia. In addition to their direct efforts, the Soviets equipped and transported four Cuban combat brigades—about 17,000 troops—to Ethiopia in late 1977 and early 1978 to support the Ethiopian forces in the Ogaden attempting to blunt Somalia's invasion. Cuban forces played a decisive role in driving the Somali Army from the Ogaden. We believe close logistic and battlefield cooperation between the Soviets, Cubans, and Ethiopians also were important factors in the Ethiopian victory.

We believe the expulsion of the Soviets from Somalia represented a severe, but temporary, setback to Soviet plans for expanding influence in the Indian Ocean and

<sup>1</sup> Since the end of the Ogaden war, the Cuban forces, which have been reduced to approximately 11,000 troops and advisers, have not undertaken major combat operations; we believe they are now employed primarily in a strategic reserve role.

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East African areas. They had uncharacteristically invested in constructing permanent naval and air facilities at Berbera. The impact of their expulsion was largely offset by Moscow's new relationship with Ethiopia. The Soviet leadership probably believed that Ethiopia had the potential—based on its population, size, resources, military base, and traditional role as an African leader—to be the dominant force in the region, a major power in African circles, and a power base for extending Moscow's regional influence. We believe the Soviets hoped to use military assistance as leverage to gain influence within the Ethiopian Government. Encouraged by the parallels between the Ethiopian and Soviet revolutions, the Soviets hoped to consolidate their position through the formation of a Marxist party that would create a permanent class of pro-Soviet leaders. We believe the Soviets probably reasoned they could then more easily pursue their interests in the Persian Gulf and Indian Ocean areas.

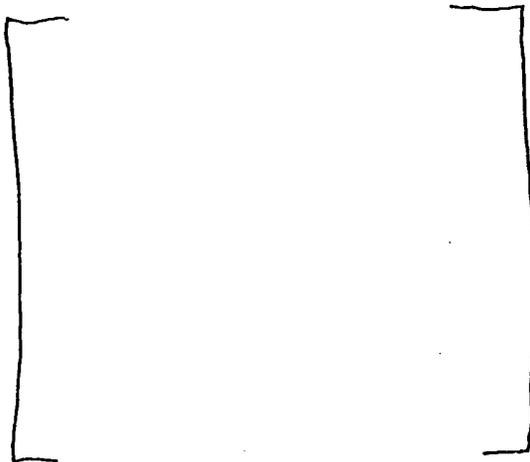
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## Appendix B

### Ethiopian Force Levels and Equipment, 1977-83

In December 1976, the Soviet Union signed its first major military assistance agreement with Ethiopia.



Soviet arms deliveries have enabled Ethiopia to increase substantially the size of its armed forces and equipment inventories. Table 2 illustrates this growth, reflecting not only Soviet deliveries but purchases from other countries such as South Yemen, Yugoslavia, and France. The current equipment levels shown are approximations, reflecting a degree of uncertainty in our estimates of the totals. This is the result of limited information on planned ground force inventories, the lack of comprehensive and frequent reporting on all operational units, and the inability to account accurately for wornout equipment and combat losses. Estimates in the table include

guns purchased by the Ethiopians but assigned to Cuban forces.

**Table 2** Force Levels and Major Equipment Inventories in Ethiopian Military Services, 1977-83 Units

	1977 (March)	1983 (January)
<b>Ground Forces</b>		
<b>Force levels</b>		
Manpower	40,000	200,000
Infantry divisions	5	22
<b>Equipment</b>		
Tanks	110	550-630
Artillery	115	726-826
Mortars	760	1,100-1,300
Air defense guns	50	655-705
Armored vehicles	170	570-670
Helicopters		24
Surface-to-air missile launchers (SA-7)		125
<b>Air Forces</b>		
<b>Force levels</b>		
Manpower	3,100	3,500-4,000
Squadrons	5	12
<b>Equipment</b>		
Bombers	3	
Fighters	35	112
Reconnaissance		12
Transports	11	25
Helicopters	4	30
<b>Navy</b>		
<b>Force levels</b>		
Manpower	1,400	3,500
<b>Units</b>		
Combatants	1	3
Noncombatants	2	3
<b>Equipment</b>		
Missile attack boats		4
Torpedo boats		5
Motor gunboats	4	7
Patrol boats	1	6
Landing craft	4	9

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**Table 2 (continued)** *Units*  
**Force Levels and Major Equipment Inventories**  
**in Ethiopian Military Services, 1977-83**

	1977 (March)	1983 (January)
<b>Air Defense Command</b>		
<b>Force levels</b>		
Manpower		2,000 *
<b>Battalions</b>		
Surface-to-air missile (SAM)		8
SAM support		2
Radar		6
<b>Equipment</b>		
SA-2 launchers		24
SA-3 launchers		21

\* Little information is available on the manning of Ethiopian SAM, SAM support, and radar battalions. If, however, such battalions are organized and manned like their Soviet counterparts, the Air Defense Command would have at least some 2,000 air defense personnel.

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