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Washington, D.C. 20505

30 JAN 1987

DIRECTORATE OF INTELLIGENCE

GI M 87-20005/a

MEMORANDUM FOR: See Distribution

FROM:

Office of Global Issues

SUBJECT:

Ethiopia: Sharp Decline in Soviet
Military Assistance

1. The attached memorandum examines the sharp decline in Soviet arms deliveries to Ethiopia during the last 12 months in the context of Moscow's military deliveries to Addis Ababa in previous years. We believe the drop reflects, in part, Ethiopia's declining need for additional major weapons systems and a decreased need for munitions and support materiel--in light of less extensive counterinsurgency operations in 1986.

2. Your comments and suggestions are welcome and may be addressed to

Office of Global Issues,

Attachment:

Ethiopia: Sharp Decline in Soviet
Military Assistance
GI M 87-20005 27 January 1987

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Central Intelligence Agency



Washington, D. C. 20505

DIRECTORATE OF INTELLIGENCE

27 January 1987

Ethiopia: Sharp Decline in Soviet Military Assistance

Summary

Soviet military deliveries to Ethiopia--fell last year to their lowest level since Moscow began making deliveries to Addis Ababa in 1977. The decline reflects, in part, Ethiopia's diminished need for additional major weapons systems and a decreased need for munitions and support materiel because of less extensive counterinsurgency operations in 1986. The decline may also reflect a decision by Moscow to reduce deliveries somewhat in the face of Addis Ababa's difficulties in meeting Soviet demands for payments on maintenance and support services. We believe that if Addis Ababa's stability is threatened, the Soviets would put aside concerns about repayment and send the weapons and military materiel necessary to preserve the regime, as well as Moscow's naval and air transport access rights.

This memorandum was prepared by [redacted] Office of Global Issues.
Information available as of 27 January 1987 was used in its preparation. Comments and queries are welcome and may be directed to the Chief, [redacted] OGI.

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Communist Deliveries Drop In 1986

Ethiopia received [] less military equipment and material []
[] in 1986 than in 1985. []

Even so, Ethiopia continues to rank as Moscow's second largest recipient of military deliveries in sub-Saharan Africa.*

Ethiopia received no major weapons systems in 1986. []
Moscow provided mostly trucks, munitions, SA-3 surface-to-air missile support equipment, and construction vehicles to support Ethiopia's military—the largest army in Black Africa.

Other arms suppliers did little to compensate for the reductions. Identified military deliveries from Communist nations other than the USSR were negligible in 1986. Addis Ababa receives virtually no arms from non-Communist states.

1986 Deliveries In Perspective

Soviet [] arms and military materiel provided to Ethiopia was lower in 1986 than in any year since Moscow began sending Addis Ababa military assistance in 1977 (Fig. 1). Moscow began its arms transfers program in Ethiopia with []
[] of arms and support materiel during 1977-1979—a significant response to Somalia's invasion of the Ogaden region. We estimate that the total value of arms delivered during this period was \$1.5 billion in current dollar terms. The early deliveries included large numbers of armored vehicles, field artillery pieces, and air defense systems. Several thousand Cuban combat troops and other advisory personnel helped Ethiopia maintain and utilize the Soviet equipment which was new to Addis Ababa's inventories. The surge in Communist military support was instrumental in enabling Mengistu's regime to defeat invading Somali forces.

Soviet arms deliveries stabilized at an annual average [] of [] or about [] (current dollars) annually, during 1980-1982. As Ethiopia's military emphasis shifted back to counterinsurgency, Moscow introduced the MI-25 attack helicopter and provided additional combat aircraft and artillery to replace equipment lost or worn out in combat against rebel forces in Eritrea. Soviet deliveries of

naval craft over the period essentially created an Ethiopian naval capability; Moscow provided patrol boats armed with Styx anti-ship missiles, landing craft, and other auxiliary vessels.

During 1983-1985,

The relatively high estimated value of Soviet deliveries—about annually in this period—can be attributed to the large influx of light-weight but expensive fighter aircraft. In addition to these aircraft, the Soviet Union shipped arms to help the Ethiopian military combat an intensifying insurgency in the Eritrean and Tigray provinces. The USSR improved Ethiopia's counterinsurgency capabilities with numerous armed transport helicopters—increasing the army's mobility and firepower, both critical for operations in rough terrain. Addis Ababa also received many items for use in maintaining its large conventional forces, including T-55 medium tanks, MiG-23 and MiG-21 fighters, and large quantities of air defense artillery and missiles—including the initial delivery of SA-9 mobile surface-to-air missiles. Ethiopia's naval capabilities improved substantially with the receipt of light frigates, hydrofoil patrol boats, and MI-14 ASW helicopters.

Why the Decline in 1986?

We believe the drop in Soviet deliveries to Ethiopia in 1986 resulted both from Addis Ababa's declining need and to a lesser degree from its declining ability to pay. On the need side, the inventory expansions in the late 1970s and early 1980s have given Ethiopia all the major weapons systems it requires for now. Moreover, the relatively low level of counterinsurgency operations in 1986 led to only minor losses of major equipment and used up relatively small amounts of ammunition and supplies already stockpiled.

As for the ability to pay, the combination of Ethiopia's growing military debt and the government's shortage of hard currency has made it virtually impossible for Addis Ababa to pay for even basic services. the Soviets have somewhat stiffened their attitude toward servicing and repayment of Ethiopia's military debt, now estimated at \$3.7 billion. The USSR is reportedly requiring Ethiopia to make hard currency deposits in Ethiopian banks to cover the purchase of emergency spare parts and support services.

Outlook and Implications

Despite the payment problems, Moscow remains committed, in our view, to maintaining Ethiopia's military advantage—in both numerical and qualitative terms—over neighboring states. The military equipment and support materiel provided in 1986—a year relatively free of major combat operations—probably reflects the minimum requirement of Ethiopia's large military forces. If the threat to Addis Ababa's stability increases, we believe the Soviets would put aside concerns about repayment and send the weapons and military materiel necessary to preserve the regime, as well as Moscow's naval and air transport access rights.