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Chad: The Growing Threat to Habre

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An Intelligence Assessment

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ALA 83-10016
February 1983

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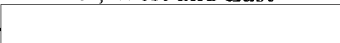


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Chad: The Growing Threat to Habre

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An Intelligence Assessment

This paper was prepared by 
Office of African and Latin American Analysis, with
a contribution by  Office of Central
Reference. Comments and queries are welcome and
may be addressed to the Chief, West and East
Africa Division, ALA 

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This paper has been coordinated with the
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February 1983*

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**Chad:
The Growing Threat
to Habre** [Redacted]

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Key Judgments

*Information available
as of 14 January 1983
was used in this report.*

We believe Chadian President Habre faces a serious and growing threat to his still fragile government from Libyan-backed dissidents who may soon launch a guerrilla offensive. Habre, opportunistic but generally pro-Western, wrested control from President Goukouni's Libyan-backed regime last June but was able to assert his authority over southern Chad three months later, after defeating factional leader Kamougue. Libya has enlisted Goukouni and Kamougue to unseat Habre and install another pro-Libyan regime in N'Djamena. If Chadian dissidents fail to inflict sufficient damage on Habre, or, if Chad's Libyan-occupied Aozou strip in the north is attacked by Habre, Qadhafi, in our view, could be tempted to mount a second invasion of Chad despite the unpopularity of such a move among his troops and the opposition of black African states. [Redacted]

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[Redacted]

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In our judgment, Habre's government would be hard pressed to survive in the face of major dissidence on two fronts. Northerners form Habre's only reliable source of support, and his army is lightly equipped, overextended, and suffers severe transport, communications, and logistic deficiencies. [Redacted]

Although Habre controls most of Chad and has formed a government with representation from all regions, we believe renewed outbreaks of factional strife would shatter this fragile cooperation. Just the threat of dissident activity and renewed Libyan intervention is diverting Habre from the tasks of reconciliation and reconstruction and may scare off some of the foreign donors who have pledged \$185 million in economic aid. [Redacted]

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We estimate that France, Chad's traditional supporter, will be less generous than in the past because of previous disappointments and lingering distrust of Habre among some French socialists. Still, we believe French concern over the potential spread of Libyan meddling among neighboring francophone states will cause them to move slowly toward providing more, albeit still limited, military and economic support for


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Chad. Moreover, should a Libyan invasion appear imminent, we believe Paris would quickly step up aid to Habre and rally francophone African diplomatic support for a more active French role. 

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We believe Habre's ouster would cause moderate Africans to question Western resolve to curb Libyan expansionism and increase their hesitation about standing up to Qadhafi in the future. Even though Habre's removal would be likely, in our view, to plunge Chad into renewed factional squabbling, Qadhafi would still try to use Chad as a base for encouraging dissidence and fomenting instability in the region. If Habre is not killed, we would expect him to revert to guerrilla operations with help from moderate Arabs to keep any new Chadian regime weak and on the defensive. 

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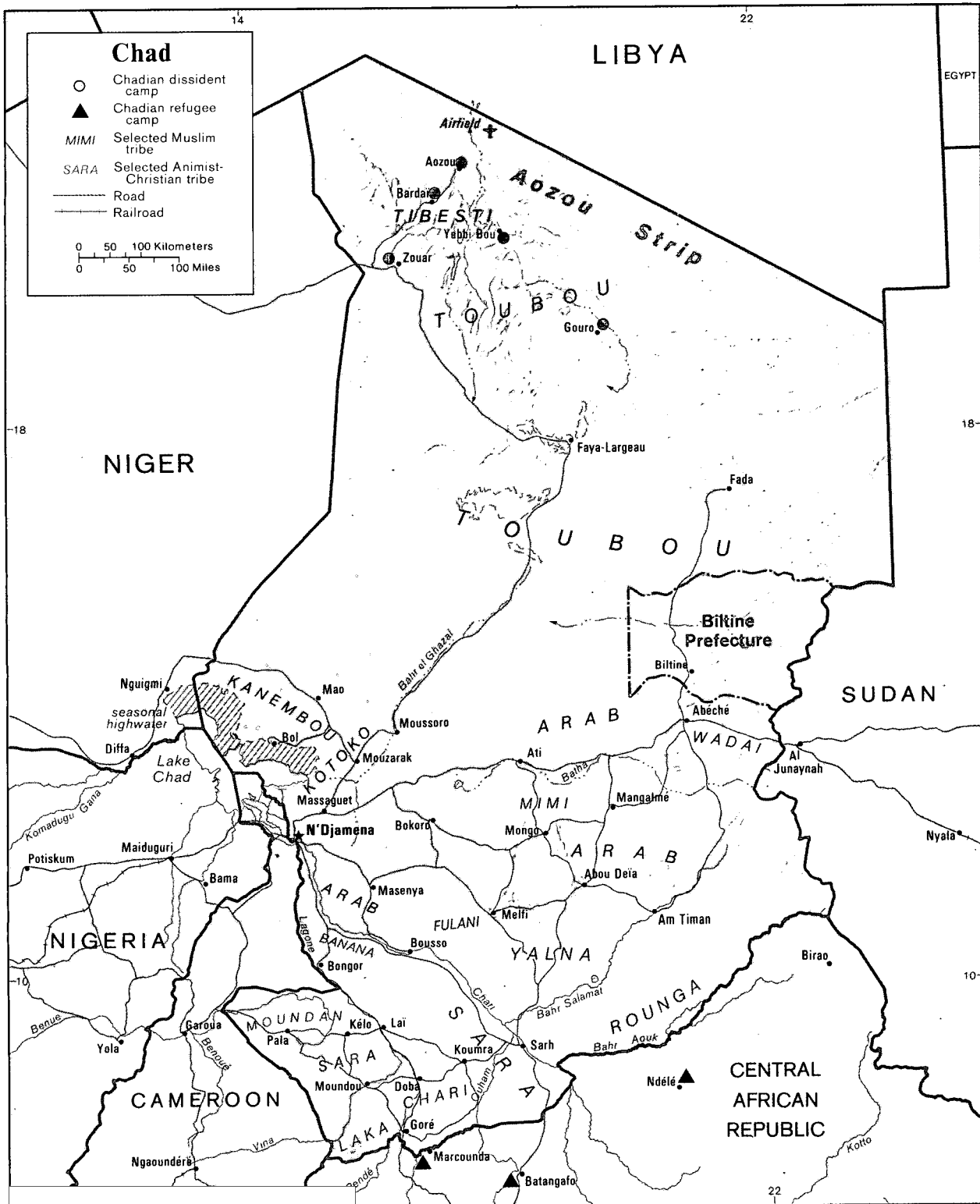
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**Chad:
The Growing Threat
to Habre** [Redacted]

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Introduction

President Hissein Habre—a moderate northerner—wrested control of strife-torn Chad last June from a coalition led by President Goukouni, a pliant northerner backed by Libyan leader Qadhafi. Three months later, Habre asserted his authority over Chad's economically vital non-Muslim south after defeating the regional forces of former Vice President Kamougue and remnants of pro-Libyan northern factions that fled to the south after the fall of N'Djamena. In our view, Habre has the potential to restore a measure of peace and stability to Chad, a starkly poor country that has been beset by civil war for most of the period since it achieved independence from France in 1960. We note, however, that his position is tenuous and vulnerable to both domestic and foreign pressures. [Redacted]

his position Chad could become a center of Libyan opposition activity. Moreover, in our judgment, Chad—because of religious and cultural ties established in the 19th century by the Libyan-based Senoussi Islamic order—remains a key target in Qadhafi's larger dream of eventually creating a pan-Islamic state across the Sahara. [Redacted]

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In our judgment, Qadhafi prefers to foment a two-front insurgency against Habre rather than commit Libyan ground forces to a second invasion to topple the Chadian leader. US Embassy reporting [Redacted] indicate that Tripoli, not long after Habre's entry into N'Djamena, began to organize Chadian dissidents—both northerners and southerners—under the leadership of ex-President Goukouni. We believe that Qadhafi demonstrated his determination to oust Habre at the second abortive OAU summit in Tripoli last November by trying to seat Goukouni as Chad's representative. This action doomed the meeting and the Libyan leader's much coveted assumption of the OAU chairmanship. [Redacted]

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Even without an external threat, US Embassy reporting indicates that Habre faces the daunting tasks of reconciling Chad's 200 ethnic groups, integrating factional forces into a national army, and restoring the war-disrupted economy. This paper examines the current Libyan and Chadian dissident threats to Habre, briefly considers his ability to deal both with them and the regime's other pressing problems, and reviews the implications of failure for US regional interests. [Redacted]

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Although Qadhafi may be tempted to invade Chad at some point, we believe a direct military move would be unpopular with his military and could provide fuel for a coup attempt. [Redacted]

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Libyan Aims To Overthrow Habre

We believe that Qadhafi's previous direct involvement in Chad, from October 1980 when he intervened with 7,000 troops until his pullout in November 1981, was a failure that the Libyan leader would like to erase from the books. According to his own public statements, Qadhafi views Habre as an unacceptable "tool" of Western interests—particularly the United States, France, Sudan, and Egypt. We believe he is also concerned that if Habre is allowed to consolidate

[Redacted] In our view, the Libyan leader may now pay more attention to that discontent than has been the case in the past. He is becoming increasingly unpopular and faces a growing problem of military unrest as reflected by fairly regular attempts by military dissidents to overthrow the regime. Moreover, Qadhafi appears to us to be concerned that any large-scale Libyan move against Chad might elicit a strong response from Egypt, the United States, and France. [Redacted]

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Antigovernment Activity

Dissidents and Libyans Threaten in the North

According to Radio Tripoli, the Libyans have brought former Chadian President Goukouni back to his native territory in Chad's rugged and remote Tibesti mountains and installed him as the head of a provisional government, with Kamougue as his deputy. The Libyan press has indicated that Goukouni's headquarters is located in Bardai, a town near Chad's Libyan-occupied Aozou strip (see map). We believe Goukouni's so-called government of national unity represents nothing more than the remnants of northern and southern Chadian factions previously allied with him and defeated by Habre last year. [redacted]

[redacted] the US defense attache in Paris indicates that Goukouni may now have as many as 1,000 men in the Tibesti area, supported by a small number of Libyan advisers. [redacted]

[redacted] these men were organized and equipped with small arms in Libya, where they received some training in small unit tactics before being sent into Chad. [redacted]

US Embassy reporting indicates that Goukouni's force is being augmented by dissident Chadians clandestinely recruited among refugees in Nigeria, Cameroon, and the Central African Republic. [redacted]

[redacted] The US Embassy in Benin reports the Chadians are gathered in Cotonou before traveling on special Libyan flights and the weekly Soviet Aeroflot service to Tripoli for training and subsequent infiltration into northern Chad. [redacted]

[redacted]

The Tibesti Area and Aozou Strip

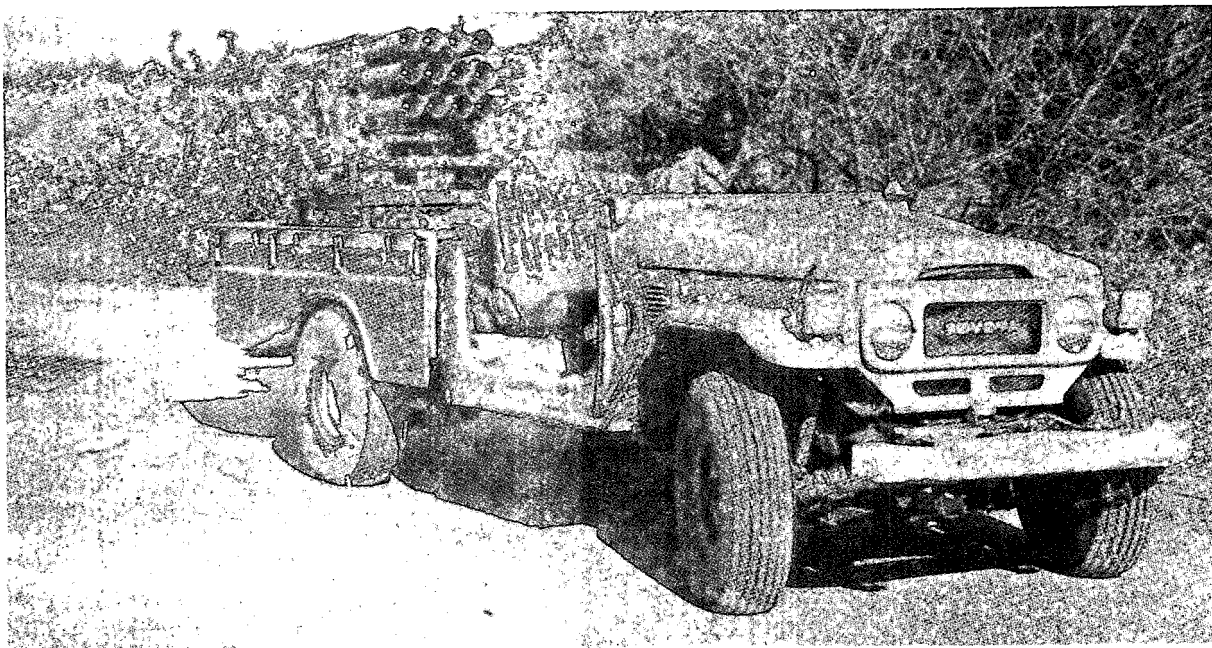
The Tibesti area—located in the far northwestern corner of Chad—is ideal as a base for guerrilla operations. Close to sources of supply in southern Libya, the Tibesti is an underpopulated area of rugged volcanic mountains in the Saharan desert, being the home only of the nomadic Teda branch of the Toubou tribe that inhabits both sides of the Libya-Chad border. The Tibesti, historically a center of Toubou rebelliousness, necessitated continued French military administration of the region for five years after Chad's independence in 1960. [redacted]

The Aozou strip—a 200-mile-deep strip below Chad's border with Libya that includes most of the Tibesti region—was occupied by Libyan troops in 1972. Libya claims sovereignty based upon precolonial religious ties by the Libyan-based Senoussi Islamic order to the area and an unratified 1935 treaty under which France was to cede the strip to Italy in exchange for territorial concessions elsewhere. The Chadian central government believes the Aozou strip is rich in resources, such as uranium, oil, and gold, and claims that Libya wants to exploit the area's wealth. The actual resource base is unknown, however, due to the years of conflict and inadequate exploration. According to old and incomplete French surveys, the area may contain some iron and low-grade uranium ore. [redacted]

The Tibesti region and Aozou strip have traditionally been more closely tied to Libya than to the rest of Chad. The Teda Toubou belong to the Senoussi Islamic order which originated in Libya, while the Daza Toubou and most of Chad's other Muslims belong to a rival order. This part of northern Chad also has traditionally had better transport links—the remains of ancient trans-Saharan routes—with settlements in southern Libya. [redacted]

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Libyan-supplied four-wheel drive trucks mounted with light multiple rocket launchers and heavy machineguns are very effective in the rugged terrain of northern Chad.

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[redacted] The US Embassy in N'Djamena reports Libyan reconnaissance aircraft are overflying Faya Largeau, Chad's largest northern town and Habre's regional headquarters, and other outposts presumably gathering intelligence for Goukouni's forces. [redacted]

Libyan officials have repeatedly stated in speeches and press releases that the Aozou strip is an integral part of Libya and will be forcefully defended. In our judgment, if Habre were to attempt to take any part of the Aozou strip by force, this could give Qadhafi an excuse to commit Libyan forces to another intervention in Chad. According to the US Embassy, Habre is preparing to ask the UN Security Council to take up a resolution calling for Libya to withdraw from the disputed Aozou strip and condemning Tripoli's hostile behavior toward Chad. Such a development, in our view, will increase tensions, and Tripoli could respond by pressuring Goukouni's forces to launch major guerrilla activity. [redacted]

No Chadian dissident attacks against Habre's major outposts in northern Chad have occurred, although we believe the risk is growing. We know that both sides operate reconnaissance patrols in outlying areas and that some small clashes have occurred that could escalate into broader fighting. The US Embassy has reported that Habre's forces mounted an unsuccessful strike in late December against the buildup of Chadian dissidents near Gouro. That failure and the continuing dissident buildup have led the Chadian Government to conclude that a dissident offensive may not be far off. [redacted]

In answer to the northern threat, Habre has reinforced Chad's nearby outposts, leaving few of his loyal forces to protect N'Djamena and maintain order in the south. The US defense attache in Paris reports that Habre now has approximately 1,500 lightly armed men in the north. [redacted]

[redacted] only 200 of Habre's most reliable troops remain in the south and 300 in N'Djamena. Another 2,000 are reportedly dispersed throughout the rest of Chad. Radio N'Djamena has announced that Egyptian instructors are helping to train a new civil police force, a development that may eventually free some additional loyal troops for strictly military duties. [redacted]

In our judgment, recent shipments of ammunition and small arms from Egypt and Sudan will help alleviate Habre's shortages until major fighting erupts. [redacted]

[redacted] we believe Habre's forces will increasingly suffer from transport, communication, and supply problems as hostilities increase. [redacted]

[redacted] Habre has few trucks to transport or resupply his troops in the far north, and [redacted] breakdowns, parts shortages, and a scarcity of pilots have further restricted Chad's limited airlift capability and were preventing deliveries of supplies to the north. [redacted]

Potential Dissident Threat in the South

We believe Habre faces an additional threat in the south because of Libyan activities in the neighboring Central African Republic (CAR). The US Embassy reported last October that the Libyans introduced some 75 military advisers into the CAR, ostensibly to train the country's soldiers in the use of recently provided Libyan military equipment. [redacted]

[redacted] Habre believes—as we do—that the Libyans' real mission in the CAR probably is to try to encourage and assist Chadian refugees in the country to mount a campaign of harassment in southern Chad. The US Embassy in Bangui speculates that, to this end, the Libyans may even try to engineer the overthrow of President Kolingba, who is a strong supporter of Habre, by bribing dissident CAR military officers. [redacted]

The US Embassy in Bangui reports that at least 1,600 former military followers of southern Chadian leader Kamougue are in CAR refugee camps near the southern Chad border. ² [redacted]

² Kamougue currently resides in the Congo, which leans toward Libya and Goukouni. [redacted]

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services, and to begin economic reconstruction. UN officials estimate \$370 million is required over the next two years. While Habre's loyal northern followers support him at least for now, we believe others—particularly southerners—will continue to back him only if they can be assured of fairly regular pay and supplies of essentials. Since his takeover last June, Habre has limped along with about \$22 million in economic aid from Saudi Arabia, France, and the United States—plus emergency food assistance from UN agencies. [redacted]

Habre's short-term financial problems are increasing. Chadian authorities have told US officials that the government has enough money to pay salaries through March or April and that the problems will become critical after that if no additional help is received.⁷ Although Chad received important pledges of aid for future economic development at a UN-sponsored donors conference in Geneva last November, the US Embassy reported that Chadian representatives were disappointed with their failure to receive promises of immediate budgetary support to meet the government's monthly payroll. [redacted]

At the Geneva conference, Chad received pledges totaling approximately \$185 million for food and reconstruction needs, which if honored should begin flowing some time later this year. The most substantial pledges were made by Saudi Arabia (\$59 million),

⁷ Constraints on issuing domestic currency arise from N'Djamena's special relationship with France. Along with all ex-French territories in west and central Africa except Guinea, Mali, and Mauritania, Chad participates in the French franc zone through the multilateral African Financial Community. A central bank located in Cameroon issues currency (CFA francs) used by Chad and four other central African states. The Africans benefit from relative monetary stability as a result of following conservative French monetary and banking policies; in exchange, zone arrangements protect France's privileged trade by setting effective ceilings on imports by Africans from outside the zone and the European Community, and minimum levels for certain imports from France. The African issuing bank must hold its member countries' pooled currency reserves and foreign exchange earnings in French francs in a French treasury account into which receipts are credited and payments debited. African franc zone states ordinarily cannot impose exchange controls or revalue their currencies without the consent of all parties, and they are obliged to follow the lead of France in these areas. Franc zone restrictions prevent governments of impoverished member states from simply printing money as an answer to their economic problems. [redacted]

France (\$35 million), and West Germany (\$20 million). Several potential donors, including Japan, have declared their intention to provide aid but are still in the process of examining Chadian needs and prospects for stability before committing themselves lest their efforts be obliterated by renewed civil war. [redacted]

The Limited French Response

France's basic interests in Chad parallel those of the United States, namely to keep the Libyans out. Even so, US Embassy reporting from Paris indicates that French policy toward Habre has been a contentious issue within President Mitterrand's government. When Habre announced his new government, the US Embassy in Paris reported that the French Government—which was strongly committed to Goukouni—only reluctantly accepted Habre as the de facto leader of Chad. In our judgment, however, advocates of closer French ties with Habre now have the upper hand in the Mitterrand government. [redacted]

We know from US Embassy reporting that the Mitterrand government played a leading role in pressing former President Goukouni to distance himself from Qadhafi's embrace and to ask Libya to remove its troops from Chad. In doing so, the French gave heavy economic backing to Goukouni. French aid ended when Habre seized power last June and was not resumed for several months until Paris was satisfied that Habre had provided adequate representation in his government for the non-Muslim south, where French interests center. [redacted]

According to US Embassy reporting, French unease with Habre stems from a variety of factors. Unlike the southerners who quickly accepted French ways, northerners—especially Toubou tribesmen like Habre—have traditionally rejected and resisted French culture and domination. Memories linger in Paris of Habre's anti-French actions as a guerrilla fighter in the 1970s against Chad's French-backed, southern-dominated government. [redacted]

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France has provided humanitarian aid to Habre's government, according to the US Embassy in N'Djamena, along with \$1.7 million in direct budgetary assistance and \$1.2 million in general development funds allocated in 10 separate areas. [redacted]

[redacted] the French budgetary assistance currently being provided is sufficient to cover less than half of the government's requirements. This assistance is subject to renewal in March. Although we believe Paris is providing modest quantities of arms, ammunition, and equipment to Habre, we do not believe that France wishes to become his major military supplier. [redacted]

Although Paris appears to us to be hesitant to resume its traditional level of involvement in Chad because of past disappointments and lingering distrust of Habre, we believe the Libyan dissident threat is nudging France in the direction of providing moderately increased economic and military support for his regime. Moreover, the US Embassy in Paris reports that should Libyan troops directly attack Chad, the Mitterrand government probably would feel compelled to quickly step up aid to Habre. Paris would, in our view, conclude that any perceived complacency on its part would seriously undermine French credibility among moderate francophone states in the region. [redacted]

Outlook and Implications for the United States

We believe Qadhafi is determined to overthrow Habre, but we do not expect direct Libyan troop intervention in the near term. Tripoli probably will continue to support Libyan-supported Chadian dissidents to undermine Habre. If this proves insufficient to achieve his goal, Qadhafi, in our judgment, may resort increasingly to aggressive direct action, such as using Libyan ground support aircraft to aid the rebels. [redacted]

In our estimate, barring a direct Libyan incursion, Habre's forces can probably cope with limited insurgent attacks in the north. We do not believe Habre would receive help from the OAU—which provided a 3,500-man peacekeeping force from November 1981 to June 1982—because Qadhafi's behavior and two abortive OAU summits in Tripoli have effectively paralyzed the organization. [redacted]

If Libya succeeds in fomenting dissident activity in the south, we believe Habre's position will become much more tenuous. We believe the present level of tension in southern Chad makes it extremely vulnerable to Qadhafi's machinations in the neighboring Central African Republic. Any renewal of fighting or heightened suspicion and fear created by a few carefully planned incidents could seriously undermine Habre's control and encourage renewed civil war. Habre's forces are already stretched to the limit, and, in our judgment, cannot face both the northern threat and serious unrest in the south at the same time. [redacted]

In our view, even in the absence of fighting, Habre's regime is being damaged by the threat of Libyan-backed dissidence. The threat is diverting attention and resources from the all-important tasks of national reconstruction and getting the new government functioning. It also complicates the task of forming an integrated national army because southerners resist being sent to defend the Muslim north. [redacted]

In our judgment, the United States, other Western nations, and moderate Arab states will continue to be faced with requests from Chad for both military and economic assistance. The major burden of organizing support for Habre will be left to the United States if France continues to delay. The United States provided \$10 million in humanitarian, food, and development aid to Habre's regime in fiscal year 1982 and has budgeted another \$9.3 million for these areas for 1983. In addition, the United States is initiating a \$50,000 military educational training program for Chadian military officers. A permanently staffed office of the US Agency for International Development was opened in N'Djamena in early January 1983. [redacted]

If the West is perceived as not adequately supporting Habre, we believe moderate African regimes will question Western resolve and be more hesitant in the future to counter Libya as they did at the two attempted summits of the OAU in Tripoli. Should Habre be toppled by Libyan subversion, we believe neighboring African states have good reason to fear

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further Libyan meddling in the region. Qadhafi has made no secret of his desire to undermine moderate pro-Western governments, realign borders imposed during the colonial era, and unite the region's Muslims under his leadership. He will only be encouraged in this desire if he succeeds in Chad. Five moderate pro-Western countries—Niger, Nigeria, Cameroon, Central African Republic, and Sudan—share borders with Chad that are largely open and unprotected, and all but the Central African Republic have sizable Muslim populations. While we do not believe Qadhafi could make immediate inroads in the region, he could use Chad as a base from which to encourage dissent and instability in the area. [REDACTED]

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In our judgment, however, a Libyan-sponsored regime would probably not be able to unify or control all of Chad's traditionally fractious population. The previous regime of President Goukouni continued to be racked by serious factional strife even while Libyan troops occupied the country. We believe the only source of unity among Chadian dissident forces today is the shared goal of getting rid of Habre and exploiting Tripoli's current willingness to provide money and arms. If Habre is removed from the political scene, we believe it will be a long time before Chad again has a chance at peace. If Habre were to be defeated militarily by Libyan-backed dissidents, Chad would, in our judgment, quickly revert to factional squabbling. We believe Habre—if not killed—would retreat to his old stronghold in the Biltine region bordering Sudan and its cross-border sanctuaries, regroup, and once again begin guerrilla operations. [REDACTED]

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Appendix

Key Chadian Leaders

Habre



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Goukouni



President Hissein Habre is the first Chadian leader to combine ambition and military strength with a dedication to national reconciliation and reconstruction. He is a tough soldier and an effective administrator. Habre is striving to overcome his reputation for ruthlessness and opportunism, having repeatedly shifted alliances in the past. A staunch nationalist, he has been implacably hostile to Libya since Qadhafi's annexation of the Aozou strip in 1972. []

Born in Faya Largeau, the 44-year-old Habre is a shepherd's son and a member of the Daza clan of Toubou tribe—the largest branch of this northern Muslim ethnic group. He was educated as a lawyer in France and speaks fluent French in addition to local Chadian languages. Habre is often described as single-minded, intelligent, and articulate. []

Goukouni Weddeye is the leader of a Libyan-backed Chadian government in exile with its headquarters near Chad's Libyan-occupied Aozou strip. He headed a Chadian government from November 1979 to June 1982 that Habre overthrew. This has left Goukouni dependent on Tripoli, which has supported him for over a decade because he is easily manipulated. []

Goukouni, about 39 years old, was born in Zouar and is the last surviving son of the Derde, the Toubou tribal spiritual leader. Essentially a simple desert warrior, he is a devout Muslim with some secondary education. Not a striking figure, Goukouni is a quiet man of Spartan tastes who feels ill at ease around better educated people. He had proved an indecisive leader whose decisions tend to reflect the last strong advocate who has seen him on a particular matter. []

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Kamougue

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Col. Wadal Abdel Kader Kamougue is the number-two man in Goukouni's government in exile, and he served as vice president in Goukouni's 1979-82 regime in N'Djamena. He [redacted] 25X6 accepts Libyan largess in hopes of regaining control over Chad's non-Muslim south. The 44-year-old Kamougue, a Catholic from the large, Western-influenced Sara tribe, was trained by the French military and at one time was considered one of Chad's most competent officers. [redacted]

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Following Habre's takeover last June, Kamougue refused to reconcile with the President despite the wishes of many southerners who were tired of conflict, and he fled to the Congo when most of his troops rallied to Habre. As the south's one-time military strongman, Kamougue reportedly exploited the region for personal gain and has been largely discredited as a leader, although elements of his former factional forces remain loyal to him. [redacted]

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