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DIRECTORATE OF
INTELLIGENCE

Intelligence Memorandum

Soviet-Somali Relations

NRO REVIEW COMPLETED

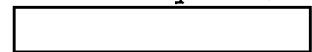
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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY
Directorate of Intelligence
26 January 1973

INTELLIGENCE MEMORANDUM

Soviet-Somali Relations

Introduction

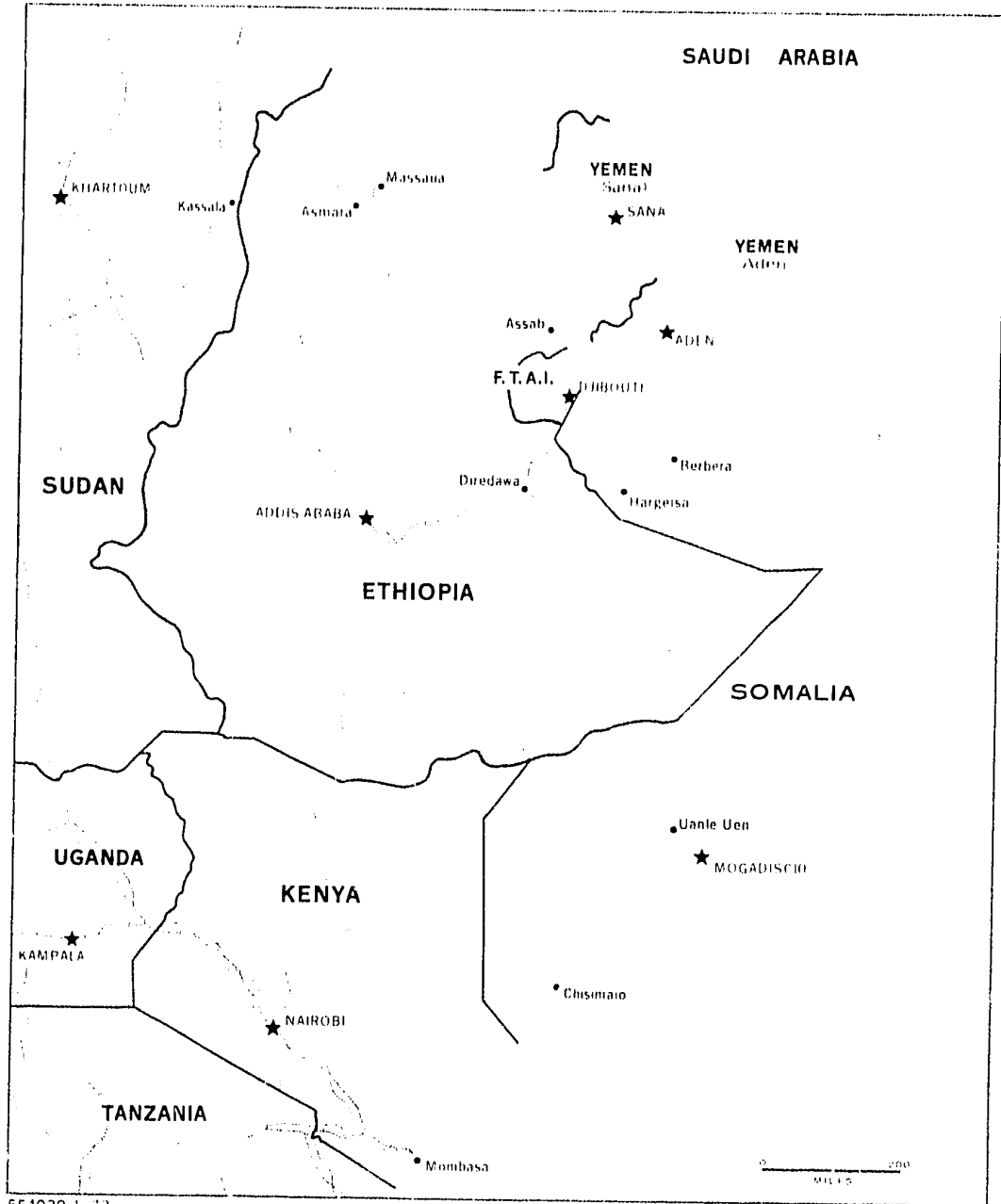
For a number of years Somali-Soviet relations have been held back by a reluctance in both capitals to get too deeply involved. A modest breakthrough was achieved in 1972. Although neither side is getting full satisfaction, the uneasy relationship now seems to be moving forward. In recent months, the Somalis have been getting more Soviet military equipment and the Soviets have managed to expand their presence in Somalia.

The breakthrough came shortly after the Soviet expulsion from Egypt last July. As in the case of Syria, Somalia at that time became more important to the Soviets. Moscow was particularly sensitive to any indication that other clients might follow Cairo's example, and Somalia seems to have capitalized on this sensitivity. The Somali desire is for better weapons and a powerful international supporter. The Soviets want freer use of Somali ports to support their naval operations in the Indian Ocean, and they would like to expand their role in Somalia to prove that Islam and Communism can get along.

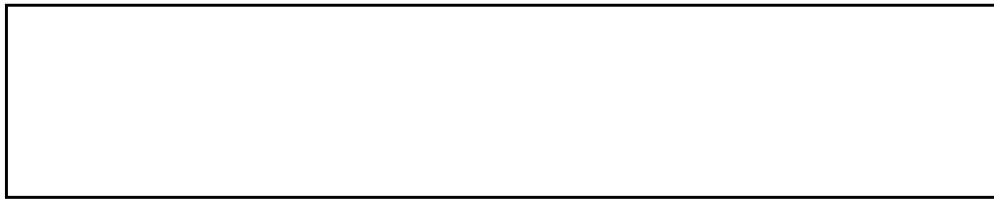
It is still largely a liaison of convenience. The distrust is mutual, but for the present, each feels a need for the other.

Note: This memorandum was prepared by the Office of Current Intelligence and coordinated within the Directorate of Intelligence.



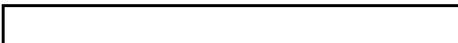


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What They Want...

The Soviets have,  asked for a friendship treaty with Somalia patterned on the treaties they have recently concluded with Egypt, India, and Iraq. Moscow also wants Soviet-controlled air and naval facilities in Somalia and has urged political changes on Mogadiscio that would bring both its government structure and ideology closer into line with the Soviet model. Somalia wants MIG-21s, T-54 tanks, and a host of other military supplies. Like all underdeveloped countries, Somalia also wants more economic aid.

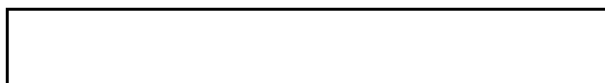
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...Is Not What They Get

Somalia has refused to negotiate a friendship treaty for fear such a treaty would identify it too closely with the Soviet Union. The Somalis reason that such a treaty would further erode their claims to nonalignment, alienate their friends in Africa and benefactors in the Arab world, and hurt their chances of playing the Soviets against the Chinese. The fiercely independent Somalis also have resisted allowing the Soviets to have military facilities that are not under Somali control. The fragile regime, buffeted by plots, maneuvering, and assassination attempts, is doubtless concerned about the domestic effects of too close an association with Moscow. Although most opposition to the regime stems from personal and tribal differences, there is considerable dissatisfaction in the government and military hierarchy with the large number of Soviets in Somalia and the heavy Soviet hand in Somali affairs. Moreover, the regime's adoption of a limited form of socialism—reflected principally in tight economic controls—has proved to be highly unpopular with several segments of society.

The Soviets have held back on supplying modern arms and, prior to the latter half of 1972, were not very vigorous about implementing previous economic aid agreements, much less committing themselves to new ones. Nevertheless, the Soviets have for a decade had considerable leverage in Somalia—largely because they were the only significant supplier of military arms. Moscow seemed reasonably content with this arrangement. When the military overthrew the essentially pro-Western civilian government in October 1969, Moscow's influence increased. Since then, Soviet aircraft and naval vessels have enjoyed frequent access to Somali facilities.

Somalia initiated what now appears to be a limited breakthrough in the stalemate. It did so—despite its fear of Soviet domination—because of what Mogadiscio apparently considers a greater issue, its territorial disputes with



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Kenya and Ethiopia. Somalia is convinced that it needs more modern weapons to place it in a better bargaining position with these countries.

In November 1971, President Siad made the first of a series of visits to Moscow by Somali dignitaries. The visible accomplishment of the Siad visit was an agreement by the Soviets to provide more economic assistance. The main items in the agreement were a dam with irrigation canals and a hydroelectric station on the Juba River near Fanole, but it also included aid for the development of Somalia's fishing industry, agriculture, and radio broadcasting.

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Defense Minister Grechko was featured in the next round of negotiations. His visit to Somali last February did not produce an official communique, but a brief joint statement said that the future development of Soviet-Somali military cooperation was discussed.

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The China Connection

Whatever Grechko promised in the way of military assistance for the Somalis, his visit was not followed by much action. The Somalis apparently were frustrated enough to make a pitch to the Chinese, a tactic that had worked in 1971. In February of that year the Soviets claimed the Fanole Dam project was not economically feasible and refused to help. In June, the Chinese extended a \$109 million credit that topped all Soviet credits to Somalia. The Soviets reversed their position in November 1971 when Siad was in Moscow and agreed to help finance and build the dam.

In May 1972, President Siad went to Peking, where he made an apparently unsuccessful request for military aid. Siad's trip may have made the Soviets nervous, however, and may have encouraged them to be somewhat more accommodating when Somali Defense Minister Samantar arrived in Moscow in July.

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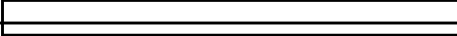
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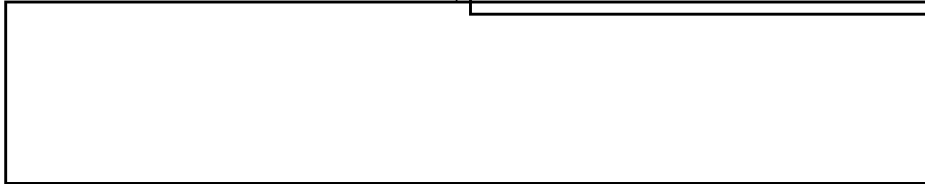
Breakthrough

It is quite possible that the Samantar trip was a turning point. Samantar had the good luck to be in Moscow when the Egyptian expulsion order was announced; thus, he caught the Soviets at a time when they did not want any more trouble from their clients.



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A speech by President Siad on 29 July gave one other indication that the two governments were moving closer together. Siad, who had previously stressed the unique and independent nature of Somalia's brand of socialism, announced that Marxist-Leninism had become the model for Somalia to follow. He rejected other forms of socialism such as "African socialism," which the Soviets regard as tainted with nationalism. The Kremlin probably does not have any illusions about Somalia's ideological purity, but these statements by Siad do represent a victory in Moscow's never-ending campaign to encourage African countries to adopt the true variety of socialism.

Results

In any case, since July the Soviets have acquired new privileges and have increased the delivery of military equipment. For the first time, Soviet submarines have been noted alongside a repair ship in the port of Berbera, presumably undergoing maintenance or replenishment.



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In November, two Soviet freighters offloaded at least 15 100-mm. artillery pieces, two MIG-15 aircraft, and several vehicles in Mogadiscio. Other recent shipments have included one P-6 patrol boat, three helicopters, and a number of armored personnel carriers. These deliveries will not satisfy the Somalis, but the MIG-15s do represent the first fighter aircraft delivered to Somalia in two years. In addition, four IL-28 light jet bombers were



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turned over to the Somalis in December, the first bomber aircraft in the Somali inventory.

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Moscow has also shown signs of reviving its aid program. Three modern Soviet fishing vessels have arrived recently to help the Somalis improve their catch.

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The number of Soviets in Somalia has grown substantially in the past year. Soviet advisers permeate many ministries and autonomous agencies. It is even rumored that there are Soviet advisers in President Siad's office. The Soviets are heavily involved in the powerful security service. There are at least 400 military advisers and several hundred civilian technicians and advisers. The latter figure includes UN and WHO representatives and Soviet workers on various assistance projects.

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There have also been reports that the Soviets are building an airfield at Berbera.

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Conclusion

Enough evidence has accumulated in recent months to indicate that the Soviets have strengthened their foothold in Somalia. This, in turn, has increased their strategic options in the Red Sea and Indian Ocean areas. Moscow has not gained formal base rights, but it has won more access to Somali facilities and is building new facilities over which it apparently will have significant control.

Good relations with Somalia provide other benefits for the USSR. After setbacks in the Sudan and Egypt, Moscow wants an opportunity to demonstrate that Islam and Marxist-Leninism are not incompatible. The Soviet position in Somalia is a useful counterweight to "socialist" African states that are oriented toward China. Looking ahead, Moscow might reason that there may well be important changes in the Horn of Africa when the aged leaders of Ethiopia and Kenya die and if and when the French pull out of the territory of the Afars and Issas. The Soviet presence in Somalia will be a valuable foundation to exploit these changes.

Because of these possibilities, the Soviets do not want to appear to be threatening Mogadiscio's neighbors. At the same time they hesitate to make

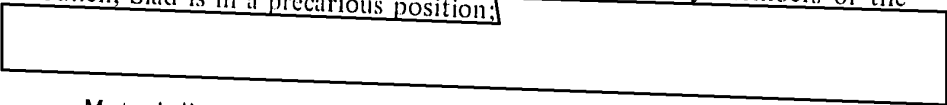
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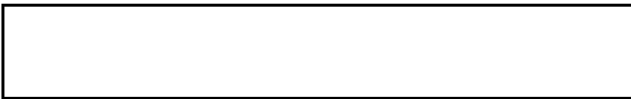
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heavy investments in Somalia because they doubt the durability of the Siad regime. The Soviet role in Somalia depends largely on the ability of Siad and other pro-Soviet members of the regime to retain control. Siad has survived several conspiracies, but the general level of discontent remains high. The Soviet issue could be used by some factions to oust Siad. Late last year Siad survived a major challenge to his position, but not without suffering the loss of many of the powers he earlier had managed to wrest from the ruling council. Now, apparently without the support of many members of the council, Siad is in a precarious position.



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Mutual distrust and suspicion between the Soviets and Somalis is likely to continue despite the recent improvements in relations. Military aid will remain the basis for the Soviet foothold in Somalia, and Mogadiscio will continue to guard against the foothold becoming a stranglehold. If the Soviets have indeed promised more modern weapons, they probably will be in no hurry to deliver them. Moscow probably will be able to get away with this stalling because Somalia cannot get these arms anywhere else, and even the Somalis must admit that they will require considerable training before they can utilize more complicated weapons.



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