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WORKING PAPER FOR [redacted] (b)(3):10 USC 424,(b)(6)

SUBJECT: Somalia: Current Threat Assessment (U)

1. ~~(S)~~ Summary. Somali President Siad faces several threats but at present, none of them seem to seriously menace his regime. Challenges to Somali security range from overwhelming Soviet-backed Ethiopian military superiority to internal political dissent based primarily on tribalism. Nevertheless, the key to power, and thus any serious threat to Siad, is his own military. Discontent in the armed forces over the lack of sufficient progress in rearming, the humiliation over dissident and Ethiopian occupation of Somali border towns and unwillingness to seek a lasting solution to tribal strife continue. However, Siad has a system of intelligence collection and control based on trusted fellow clansmen and other trusted allies, which makes plotting in the security forces dangerous.

2. (U) External Threat.

a. ~~(S)~~ Although the Ethiopians face logistical, morale and leadership problems, Soviet, Cuban and Libyan backing provides an overwhelming overall military superiority over the Somalis. However, except during the 1977 invasion of the Ogaden, northern insurgencies have always been the top priority security concern for the Ethiopian regime. Although some replacements have been sent to the southern Ogaden in the last few weeks, poor training and low morale make them only a marginal improvement. Despite the mid-1982 border attacks and early April skirmishes this year, the Ethiopians are unlikely to mount a full-scale invasion of Somalia unless Somali regular army or guerrilla activity again seriously threatens security in the Ogaden. The Ethiopians are capable, with little or no warning of conducting incursions into Somalia such as those of mid-1982. They can conduct air raids on Somalia almost at will, but again will probably be restrained, except in case of Somali activity along the border or in the Ogaden.

b. ~~(S)~~ Externally-based Somali dissidents pose an increasing threat to internal security in Somalia. These forces are supported by Ethiopia and Libya but essentially are clan-based groups which suffer from internal lack of discipline, logistical and training problems and in some cases sub-clan disputes. They are also somewhat limited to operations in their own clan homelands where they can garner greatest popular support. Within those areas, especially in northern Somalia, the number of ambushes, road minings and hit-and-run raids has increased over the last few months. They will probably continue to increase, especially in the north, due to the guerrillas' inability to transition to significant conventional operations and Somali difficulty in blocking infiltration across the border. The dissidents have attempted some terrorist acts but these have been few and more demonstrative than destructive. They are not expected to mount a significant terrorist campaign at least for the time being.

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3. (U) Internal Threat.

a. ~~(S)~~ Although there is a great deal of grumbling in various sectors of society there appears to be no immediate threat to Siad's control. Many are concerned that their clans have too little influence in the government; many in the military believe the pace of rearmament after its losses during the 1977-78 Ogaden war is progressing too slowly; others are frustrated by the continued Ethiopian occupation of Somali border towns. Nevertheless, few believe there is anyone available other than Siad with the political skill to maintain national unity. Opposition groups include leftist and dissident sympathizers. The leftists are watched closely and probably do not have the numbers or broad enough support to manage a coup. The dissident sympathizers' clan base probably makes their support too narrow to oust Siad on their own. They are not considered a serious threat unless Ethiopia chooses to try to unseat Siad using the dissidents as a front for their own action.

b. ~~(S)~~ Discontent in the military is probably Siad's greatest danger. Armed forces personnel are affected by lengthy frontline tours and repeated alerts, weapons obsolescence, poor training, supply and maintenance problems, and tribalism. The latter has been the most serious over the last few months. It has led to diversion of frontline personnel to control tribal fighting, tribal conflict within units, and command and control problems. Some reports suggest these problems may force LTG Samantar to relinquish the defense minister post after his return from a trip to the US in June. Such a move would be typical, since Siad shuffles key personnel frequently and controls most officer assignments, insuring that clansmen or other supporters have a major share of positions. Although this contributes to problems of tribalism, it has thus far provided an efficient system of informants and Siad supporters in key slots which makes plotting against the regime difficult.

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