

Wikileaks: Ethiopian Army rebuffs US probe into N. Korean ties



Two leaked Cables of US Embassy Addis Ababa, both dated January 14, 2008, and classified as confidential, disclose the stiff resistance the Ambassador met from the Ethiopian National Defense Forces(ENDF).

The first Cable focuses on issues of military assistance, while the other discusses the Ambassador's effort to probe into Ethiopia and North Korea cooperation.

The first Cable reports the strong words from ENDF Chief of Staff Samora Yenus in a Jan 4, 2008 meeting. In the meeting, Ambassador Yamamoto , joined by his aids, noted that *'the U.S. has shown remarkable results in meeting the needs of the ENDF and Ethiopia'*. The Cable presents the response as follows:

Gen. Samora responded aggressively, in tone if not demeanor, that the "U.S. did not support a single bullet for our operations in Somalia." Samora reiterated the \$3 million expense for five U.S. civilian contract trainers and argued that \$2.5 million in C-130 spare parts "is nothing" in comparison to the sacrifices made by Ethiopian troops in Somalia without U.S. financial support.

Despite 1,500 Ethiopian troops ready to deploy to Darfur, they remain delayed, Samora argued, waiting for promised-yet-undelivered supplies from the U.S. He highlighted that the USG had suspended additional deliveries of [HUMVEES](#) in late-2005 as a result of the use of the HUMVEES to transport ENDF troops firing on civilian protesters during the post-2005 election violence which raised serious human rights concerns. The General reiterated his anger made to the previous U.S. Charge that "you can take back the other 16 (HUMVEES) that you gave us before that."

Despite noting that the USG's political support is valued within the GoE, Gen. Samora ended the conversation by complaining that Ethiopia had trained 680 Somali Transitional Federal Government troops without U.S. financial support and had recently brought another 1,000 Somali troops for training. "It would be good if the U.S. helped with this," Samora lamented, "but not critical...We can do it ourselves; like everything else we do."

[Note that this Cable was written 5 and 6 months prior to the Cables discussed in [Wikileaks: US angered by Ethiopian Army, curious about Israeli role](#) and [Wikileaks: US - Ethiopia: 17 imperial demands](#), respectively]

The second Cable reports on the Ambassador's attempt to visit the Ambo munitions factory, allegedly supported by North Korea.

The Cable indicates that *'in response to sustained general expressions of concern about the Ethiopia-North Korea arms relationship with senior Ethiopian Government (GoE) officials, the Ministry of National Defense in November agreed to take an Embassy team and a Washington-based USG expert to see the North Korean-supported arms and munitions factory in Ambo.'*

Nonetheless, ENDF officials cancelled the visit in short notice claiming that *'whatever relationship with North Korea existed in Ambo was technical and minimal, and therefore not worth all this attention and U.S. concern. He added that at a practical level, Ethiopia simply needed to keep this factory running to the degree possible to assure the ENDF supply of small arms munitions, but that the quantities produced were minimal and did not even suffice to ensure a proper supply for the ENDF.'*

Following the visit's cancellation, Ambassador Yammato contacted Defense Minister (DefMin) Kuma Demeksa and Chief of Defense Staff (CHOD) Gen. Samora Yonus on January 3 and 4 respectively. The response from the two officials, as presented in the Cable, was:

The DefMin suggested noted that there would be no problem with the visit if Ethiopia were to get technology or financial assistance from it, but otherwise advised the Ambassador to raise the issue with the CHOD. Gen. Samora aggressively cut off the Ambassador during his presentation and said that he would only allow Post to "inspect" that Ambo facility if he received a written directive from the Prime Minister.

General Samora elaborated the role of the Korean as follows:

Samora noted that the ENDF "is working with North Korea, and will continue to do so, because they are cheap." Samora admitted that the ENDF has been relying on North Korean arms and is dependent on them, even for maintenance. They continue the established

relationship with North Korea, however, because they are helping to build Ethiopia's capacity, which will reduce Ethiopia's dependence on North Korean supplies and technical assistance.

As evidence of Ethiopia's focus on developing national capacity to replace dependence on outside sourcing, Gen. Samora noted that the "[North Koreans](#) have now finished their work and are leaving" the Gafat factory near [Debre Zeit](#), noting that the ENDF can now produce [AK-47s](#) fully themselves. Now, Chinese workers are in Debre Zeit to overhaul tanks, he continued, which also boosts Ethiopian capacity. Samora claimed that Ethiopia has not purchased arms for import from North Korea since a shipment was lost in a ship fire in the Spring (see Ref B for initial reporting). Now we are only buying skills from the North Korea, and will continue to do so, Samora repeated, because it is cheap.

The Ambassador later commented in the Cable that:

In light of Gen. Samora's hawkish, yet near-peer, standing vis-a-vis Prime Minister Meles within the Central Committee of Ethiopia's ruling TPLF party and Prime Minister Meles' dependence on Samora for support within the Central Committee, it would be unlikely that Meles would reverse Samora's decision. Still, Ambassador and Post believe that the GoE political leaders, including the Foreign and Prime Ministers, will provide a more complete and forthcoming disclosure of the nature, scope, and future of the Ethiopia-North Korea arms sourcing relationship. Ambassador and Post will pursue those discussions in the coming weeks.

Note that Gen. Samora is not a member of the ruling party, since 1995. Though, he was a veteran combatant in the insurgency that ousted the military regime in 1991. This reminds us that not everything written in the US Embassy Cables is accurate.

Read the full text of the two cables below.

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RHMFSS/CJTF HOA IMMEDIATE

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RUEKDIA/DIA WASHINGTON DC IMMEDIATE

RHMFSS/HQ USCENTCOM MACDILL AFB FL IMMEDIATE

RUEKJCS/JOINT STAFF WASHINGTON DC IMMEDIATE

RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHINGTON DC IMMEDIATE

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 ADDIS ABABA

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 01/08/2018

TAGS: MARR PREL EAID ET

**SUBJECT: DEFENSE OFFICIALS REQUEST MORE
MILITARY AID**

REF: A. ADDIS 87

B. ADDIS 46

C. 07 ADDIS 1535

Classified By: Ambassador Donald Yamamoto for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

SUMMARY

1. (C) In January 3 and 4 meetings with Ambassador, DATT, ORA Chief, and P/E Chief, Defense Minister (DefMin) Kuma Demeksa and Chief of Defense Staff (CHOD) Gen. Samora Yonus respectively argued for more U.S. military assistance to Ethiopia to focus more on in-country training to develop Ethiopian military (ENDF) capacity rather than training in the U.S. The Ethiopian Government (GoE) rejected 20 of 27 offered training opportunities in the U.S. in 2007. Both officials used the opportunity of questions on Ethiopia's plans to deploy troops to Darfur to inquire about promised equipment supplies from the U.S. and, in the case of Gen. Samora, to harangue Post for the USG's history of "broken promises" to the ENDF. Ref B details Ethiopian plans to deploy peacekeeping troops to Darfur; responses on Post's inquiries on Ethiopia's arms relationship with North Korea was reported in Ref A. End Summary.

MILITARY ASSISTANCE TO BUILD ETHIOPIAN CAPACITY

2. (C) The Ambassador queried both the DefMin and CHOD as to why the ENDF continues to reject the vast majority of training offers (20 of 27 training offers in the U.S. in 2007) despite Post's successful efforts over the past year to increase significantly U.S. military assistance levels to Ethiopia in specific response to Gen. Samora's demand for more training, equipment, and support. The Ambassador applauded Ethiopia's record as a contributor of peacekeeping troops and argued that senior-level training in the United States could assist the appointment of Ethiopians to command peacekeeping forces in the field. While the DefMin noted the lack of senior-level command skills as a crucial area of interest, both he and the CHOD argued that developing the capacity of the Ethiopian Defense Command and Staff

College (EDCSC) (established and supported by the U.S. Embassy, DoD, and CENTCOM) is very important as a means to enhance such skills among the ENDF officer corps more broadly than by one-off trainings for individual ENDF officers in the U.S. Ambassador noted that while this makes sense in training a larger number of officers and NCOs, it would not meet a major concern of General Samora's: for Ethiopian generals to command Ethiopian troops in UN peacekeeping deployments. In Liberia, Ethiopian troops are commanded by generals of other countries because none of the Ethiopian generals have attended the prerequisite war colleges which are primarily in the U.S., and other advanced military training. While Ethiopian commanders have exceptional battlefield experience and are first rate commanders, the lack of academic training will continue to hold back Ethiopian generals from commanding their own troops in UN peacekeeping deployments.

3. (C) The Ambassador noted that two U.S. Army instructors are currently at the EDCSC and a U.S. Air Force instructor will arrive next week, Post's SAO did note that the availability of U.S. trainers is not predictable in light of the U.S. military's current operations tempo and that perhaps this required discussions on bringing Ethiopian trainers up to speed more quickly. While DefMin used the opportunity to encourage the USG to send additional U.S. trainers to the EDCSC to deliver courses and train Ethiopian trainers, the CHOD aggressively argued that despite additional military assistance, Ethiopia reaps only minimal benefits from it due to the high cost of USG personnel and equipment. Gen. Samora specifically raised the problem of five civilian trainers contracted by the Department of State to be the first teachers at the EDCSC. The cost of the contract was USD 3 million. General Samora complained that that was too expensive and the money could have been used more efficiently to train his officers. (The General was distinctly satisfied, however, that uniformed U.S. military personnel are now teaching at the EDCSC rather than

expensive civilian contractors. Still, the General is famous for never saying thank you or expressing appreciation.)

4. (C) When Ambassador highlighted that after years of Ethiopian Government requests the USG is again providing ADDIS ABAB 00000089 002 OF 003 spare parts to rehabilitate two ENDF C-130 planes, which were provided by the U.S. in 1997, Gen. Samora complained in his usual manner that the assistance was late and too costly. He said that that USG spent \$2.5 million and the spare parts are really only worth 2.5 million Birr or USD 270,000.

5. (C) When Ambassador raised the proposal by Defense Minister Kuma for a bilateral dialogue with ENDF officials on how optimally to use U.S. military training assistance Gen. Samora cut him off arguing that he had discussed these issues with Generals Whitcomb and Ward. Samora argued that while individual training may help that one person, it does not help the group or change things. The General argued that U.S. assistance is needed to help build Ethiopia's own training capacity. Samora did acknowledge a training team sent by General Whitcomb to focus on rules of engagement as the training enabled the ENDF to develop its own manual on the subject. The ENDF is now working on Field Manuals. Samora concluded the subject by declaring that "I have no plan of sending individuals" for training.

THE LAMENT OF THE BROKEN PROMISES

6. (C) Despite Gen. Samora's antagonism toward the U.S., he is tremendously influential due to his positions both as CHOD as well as a member of the powerful executive committee of the ruling EPRDF party. Samora is widely noted as pro-China and pro-Israel, but distinctly antagonistic to the U.S. because of criticisms of human

rights concerns by U.S. officials. Samora has told the Ambassador in the past that Israel and China are exceptional bilateral partners because of their decorum in helping the ENDF and not criticizing the ENDF and Ethiopia for shortcoming and other problems.

7. (C) Ambassador conceded that there had been promises which the USG had not maintained in the past, but noted that the U.S. has shown remarkable results in meeting the needs of the ENDF and Ethiopia and that promises are never made, only concrete results are demonstrated by the U.S. Gen. Samora responded aggressively, in tone if not demeanor, that the "U.S. did not support a single bullet for our operations in Somalia." Samora reiterated the \$3 million expense for five U.S. civilian contract trainers and argued that \$2.5 million in C-130 spare parts "is nothing" in comparison to the sacrifices made by Ethiopian troops in Somalia without U.S. financial support. Despite 1,500 Ethiopian troops ready to deploy to Darfur, they remain delayed, Samora argued, waiting for promised-yet-undelivered supplies from the U.S. He highlighted that the USG had suspended additional deliveries of HUMVEES in late-2005 as a result of the use of the HUMVEES to transport ENDF troops firing on civilian protesters during the post-2005 election violence which raised serious human rights concerns. The General reiterated his anger made to the previous U.S. Charge that "you can take back the other 16 (HUMVEES) that you gave us before that." Despite noting that the USG's political support is valued within the GoE, Gen. Samora ended the conversation by complaining that Ethiopia had trained 680 Somali Transitional Federal Government troops without U.S. financial support and had recently brought another 1,000 Somali troops for training. "It would be good if the U.S. helped with this," Samora lamented, "but not critical...We can do it ourselves; like everything else we do."

COMMENT

8. (C) Despite the Ambassador's courtesy meeting with DefMin Kuma Demeksa, it was clear that Kuma, a political operative without military experience, is prevented from playing a role in military procurement and operations by General Samora. The DefMin maintains only minimal awareness of ENDF plans and operations and Gen. Samora holds the reins of power. Kuma's apparent mantra of "I have no information on that subject" — employed five times in a 45 minute meeting — only fuels the theory of skeptics that he serves largely as an ethnic Oromo figurehead deferring overwhelmingly to Tigreans like Samora and Prime Minister Meles on substantive military issues. While Post will continue to at least offer the ENDF senior training opportunities in the U.S., we fully understand ENDF's desire to develop local capacity. Current military assistance programming has been re-oriented in consultation with the Ethiopian Government to address this desire by ADDIS ABAB 00000089 003 OF 003 focusing on U.S. military trainers, not expensive civilian contractors, and equipment for the EDCSC. Further, we continue to focus on providing spare parts for the ENDF's C-130 to enable the military to better meet its own deployment needs, and looking at another high priority: establishment of a combat engineer battalion.

YAMAMOTO

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C O R R E C T E D C O P Y – PARAGRAPH MARKINGS

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 01/09/2018

TAGS: PARM MARR PREL KN ET

SUBJECT: (C) DEFENSE OFFICIALS IMPOSE LAST-MINUTE IMPEDIMENTS ON ARMS INQUIRY ON NORTH KOREA

REF: A. 07 ADDIS 3528

B. 06 ADDIS 3223

C. STATE 124866

Classified By: Ambassador Donald Yamamoto for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

SUMMARY

1. (S/NF) Despite Prime Minister Meles' apparent receptivity to discussing Ethiopia's arms supply relationship with North Korea (Ref A) as well as discussion with the Secretary during her visit, Ethiopia's Chief of Defense Staff (CHOD), General Samora Yonus, adamantly opposes U.S. scrutiny of Ethiopian munitions factories connected with North Korea or any other country, and dismissed U.S. concerns over North Korea-Ethiopia ties arguing that these are productive and not in violation of international agreements. General Samora was emphatic in stressing that North Korean arms are inexpensive and North Korean help with arms manufacturing will allow Ethiopia to meet its obligations in UN peacekeeping missions and its strategic interests in Somalia. The General criticized the Ambassador personally for delays in the provision of U.S. support for operations in Somalia and urged support for their UNPKO deployments.

2. (S) Over the past month, Ambassador has pursued a visit to the North Korean-supported arms and munitions factory in Ambo. While the Ambo visit would have provided unprecedented first-hand observation of the largest North Korean-supported arms factory in country, it would have primarily provided a frank and direct dialogue between our two countries on the scope, nature and future of the Ethiopian-North Korean arms relationship and its effect on U.S.-Ethiopian ties. While the cancellation of the visit and the military's new-found tough stance on this issue highlights the opportunity lost to raise this issue in depth, the Ambassador will personally pursue this issue in depth with the Foreign and Prime Ministers in coming weeks. End Summary.

THE AMMO IN AMBO IS NOT TO BE SEEN

3. (S) In response to sustained general expressions of concern about the Ethiopia-North Korea arms relationship with senior Ethiopian Government (GoE) officials, the Ministry of National Defense in November agreed to take an Embassy team and a Washington-based USG expert to see the North Korean-supported arms and munitions factory in Ambo. Just days before the December 18 planned visit, State Minister for Defense Sultan Mohammed — Post's principle defense interlocutor on the North Korean arms relationship — unexpectedly resigned his position. Despite a Diplomatic Note to Post in mid-December noting that the visit would be postponed, upon pursuit of rescheduling the visit, the Ethiopian military's (ENDF) international relations officer Gen. Hassan informed Acting DATT on December 28 that the visit was canceled. Gen. Hassan stated that whatever relationship with North Korea existed in Ambo was technical and minimal, and therefore not worth all this attention and U.S. concern. He added that at a practical level, Ethiopia simply needed to keep this factory running to the degree possible to assure the ENDF supply of small arms munitions, but that the quantities produced were minimal and did not even suffice to ensure a proper supply for the ENDF.

4. (S/NF) In following up on the visit's cancellation, Ambassador called on Defense Minister (DefMin) Kuma Demeksa and Chief of Defense Staff (CHOD) Gen. Samora Yonus on January 3 and 4 respectively. Ambassador expressed his understanding of Ethiopia's orientation toward North Korea as a low price source for arms and munitions in light of inexpensive imports and the on-going production at North Korean-supported factories in Ethiopia, but noted the parameters of UNSC resolution 1718. Ambassador noted that the U.S. interest in the relationship stems from the U.S. desire to assist Ethiopia to maintain necessary and affordable access to military materiel while

avoiding sanctions and coming into compliance with its United Nations obligations. In response to the Ambassador's request to reschedule the Ambo factory visit, DefMin noted that "we know that the United States is helping us and that we have work to do" but immediately asked what support the Ambassador could promise following the visit. The Ambassador replied that while the visit would show the GoE's commitment to moving toward complying with UNSCR 1718, it would also allow the USG to provide advice on alternate sourcing and factory refurbishment options. DefMin noted that there would be no problem with the visit if Ethiopia were to get technology or financial assistance from it, but otherwise advised the Ambassador to raise the issue with the CHOD. Gen. Samora aggressively cut off the Ambassador during his presentation and said that he would only allow Post to "inspect" that Ambo facility if he received a written directive from the Prime Minister. Samora noted that the ENDF "is working with North Korea, and will continue to do so, because they are cheap." Samora admitted that the ENDF has been relying on North Korean arms and is dependent on them, even for maintenance. They continue the established relationship with North Korea, however, because they are helping to build Ethiopia's capacity, which will reduce Ethiopia's dependence on North Korean supplies and technical assistance.

5. (S) As evidence of Ethiopia's focus on developing national capacity to replace dependence on outside sourcing, Gen. Samora noted that the "North Koreans have now finished their work and are leaving" the Gafat factory near Debre Zeit, noting that the ENDF can now produce AK-47s fully themselves. Now, Chinese workers are in Debre Zeit to overhaul tanks, he continued, which also boosts Ethiopian capacity. Samora claimed that Ethiopia has not purchased arms for import from North Korea since a shipment was lost in a ship fire in the Spring (see Ref B for initial reporting). Now we are only buying skills from the

North Korea, and will continue to do so, Samora repeated, because it is cheap.

THE WAY FORWARD

6. (C) While pursuit of the site visit to the Ambo factory offered an attractive forum for a robust discussion and first-hand observation of a manifestation of the Ethiopia-North Korea arms relationship, its cancellation is evidence of the diversion that the offer of a factory visit really represented from Post's pursuit of this issue. Post is now developing a non-paper on this issue — which it will clear with ISN — for the Ambassador to present privately to senior GoE interlocutors in discussions on this issue in coming weeks. The non-paper will lay out Ethiopia's obligations under UNSC resolution 1718, the Administration's reporting requirements under the INKSNA legislation, and the possible implications of Ethiopia's current relationship with North Korea. The non-paper will go on to note the USG's willingness to assist Ethiopia in finding potential alternate sources for its North Korean arms imports and to advise on refitting the existing North Korean-supported arms and munitions factories in Ethiopia. In discussing the matter with Foreign Minister Seyoum and Prime Minister Meles, the Ambassador will explicitly pursue details included in Ref C on the scope and nature of current imports of arms, munitions, and related materiel from North Korea, the extent and nature of North Korean technical assistance in support of arms and related production in Ethiopia, the uses and possible export of materiel produced in Ethiopia with North Korean assistance, and Ethiopia's plan to diversify fully away from dependence on North Korean supplies and assisted production. Post will continue, however, to pursue the possibility of a visit to the Ambo facility as well as the factory in Debre Zeit.

COMMENT

7. (S/NF) The Ambassador and Post assess that the arguments posed by Prime Minister Meles in Ref A and to the Secretary on Dec. 5 — that Ethiopia maintains its current arms sourcing and production assistance relationship with North Korea because it is cheap and due to the sunk costs invested in the North Korean-supported Ethiopian factories — are genuine. Further, Gen. Samora's argument of the ENDF's continued reliance on North Korea as a means to establish and develop Ethiopian capacity to operate the existing arms and munitions factories in country is fully consistent with similar local capacity arguments Samora has invoked on unrelated, less-sensitive matters. Gen. Samora's self-contradictory comments about the North Korean relationship — alternating between "we will continue to source from North Korea" and "we haven't sourced from North Korea in the past year" as well as "the North Koreans have left" and "some of the North Koreans may still be around" — suggest his fundamental unwillingness to be forthcoming with us on this relationship. In light of Gen. Samora's hawkish, yet near-peer, standing vis-a-vis Prime Minister Meles within the Central Committee of Ethiopia's ruling TPLF party and Prime Minister Meles' dependence on Samora for support within the Central Committee, it would be unlikely that Meles would reverse Samora's decision. Still, Ambassador and Post believe that the GoE political leaders, including the Foreign and Prime Ministers, will provide a more complete and forthcoming disclosure of the nature, scope, and future of the Ethiopia-North Korea arms sourcing relationship. Ambassador and Post will pursue those discussions in the coming weeks.

YAMAMOTO