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DEPARTMENT OF STATE
Memorandum of Conversation

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DATE: 16 March 1978

SUBJECT: Middle East, Horn of Africa
SALT, Other Multilateral Matters

PARTICIPANTS: US _____ USSR _____

The Secretary
Marshall Shulman, S/MS
Gerard Smith, S/AS (Portions)

Amb. Anatoliy Dobrynin

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AF, ACDA, IO, Embassy Moscow

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SUMMARY: During a tour d'horizon at a luncheon prior to Dobrynin's return to Moscow on consultations, the Secretary handed Dobrynin oral notes responding to previous Soviet inquiries about South African nuclear test plans and Israeli possession of nuclear weapons. Dobrynin presented an oral note deploring the Israeli military action in southern Lebanon and urging the US to use its influence to induce Israeli withdrawal. The Secretary said we would call for Israeli withdrawal and the establishment of a UN peacekeeping force. On the Horn of Africa, the Secretary expressed satisfaction that the Ethiopians had not crossed the border into Somalia but indicated concern about reports of reprisals in the Ogaden. Dobrynin said the Ethiopians had been told that the Soviets and Cubans "did not intend to and preferred not to" become involved in Eritrea.

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MIDDLE EAST: Dobrynin handed over an oral note on the Israel-Lebanon situation. The note asserted that Israel's military action is dangerous and that the risk of involvement by other Middle East states cannot be ruled out. It said Israeli military intervention in Lebanon could set back by many years the possibility of a Middle East settlement and urged the US to exert influence on Israel to halt the intervention and withdraw.

The Secretary told Dobrynin that we would call for Israeli withdrawal from Lebanon and the establishment of a UN peacekeeping force in the area to stabilize the situation. He said we hoped the Lebanese would bring the matter to the Security Council, but that we would consider doing so if they did not.

(Drafting Office and Officers)
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Dobrynin replied that the Soviet position was simply to call for Israeli withdrawal without conditions. He expressed the opinion that the Lebanese would agree to a peacekeeping force only if it had the concurrence of the Syrians. He said that he would keep us informed of any development in the Soviet position, and the Secretary said that we would keep the Soviet Union informed of our plans with regard to the Security Council.

On the topic of a comprehensive Middle East settlement, Dobrynin explained why the Soviets reacted so strongly to the Sadat initiative. He said they had just succeeded in obtaining Syrian agreement to go to a Geneva conference when Sadat announced his trip.

HORN OF AFRICA: The Secretary told Dobrynin we were pleased the Somalis had withdrawn, and that the Ethiopian forces and those fighting with them had respected the border, but he expressed concern at recent reports of reprisals in the Ogaden. Dobrynin expressed the personal view that this might be because of Siad Barre's support of irregular forces left behind. The Secretary said we were planning to give support to the UN High Commissioner's efforts to deal with human needs in the area, and hoped the Soviets would cooperate. He also informed Dobrynin that the President would be sending Moose as emissary to Siad Barre.

Dobrynin implied that the reduction or withdrawal of Soviet forces from the area would be less difficult if there were not public statements to make it seem that this was being done under pressure. Dobrynin said the Ethiopians had been informed that the Soviets and Cubans would be very careful not to be involved in Eritrea. When questioned about the Cuban and Soviet presence on the coast around Assab, Dobrynin said he had no information, but that he would find out when he got to Moscow.

Dobrynin made the familiar point about the presence of US forces in Iran in justifying a Soviet case for a presence in Ethiopia, adding that the Administration had testified before the Congress that the US military presence would go as high as 40,000. The Secretary corrected him and pointed out that the US has about 1200 uniformed personnel plus about 6000 civilian contract employees connected with sales of military equipment. He said that the total US community, including the above, their dependents, and businessmen, is about 40,000.

In the course of the conversation on the Horn, Dobrynin mentioned that the Somalis had recently raised with the Soviet Union the question of whether the idea of a federation in the Horn (discussed by Castro during his visit last year) could be revived, but he said they were not given any encouragement.

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