



THE LAST SEVEN DAYS OF KAGNEW STATION ASMARA, ETHIOPIA

23 April 1977 – 29 April 1977

By: Captain T.L. Hardin, USN

23 APRIL 1977

THE FIRST DAY

Saturday, 23 April 1977 started like many other Saturdays in Asmara. The Navy-sponsored barbeque brought all the American Naval and civilian personnel together for fun and relaxation after another normal work week. Recordings of *The Platters* and *Bill Haley & the Comets* blared back at the hot African afternoon sun. The party continued into the early evening hours with no significant events or distractions from the usual social gathering.

Downtown at the American Consulate, things were different. Just after 1900, **Mr. Keith Wauchope, Acting American Consul General**, received a phone call from the Marine Guard stating that **Mr. Tienken, Acting American Ambassador** in Addis Ababa, had called and requested Wauchope to return the call immediately. In the return call, Wauchope was informed that a very important message was on its way that would cause major problems. He was further advised to have his communicator standing by and to pay special attention to the classification and precedence indicators of the incoming message. At the time, Wauchope was still in the dark as to the text of the message and what was really going on. The Consulate Communicator was in downtown Asmara and could not be located. However, the backup communicator from the Admin Office was contacted by phone and instructed to return to the Consulate.



At about 1940, the message arrived. It stated that the **Ethiopian Provisional Military Government (EPMG)** wished to close the Military Assistance Advisory Group (MAAG), Naval Medical Research Unit (NMRU), the United States Information Service (USIS), Kagnew and the Consulate in four days' time. The text stated that there had been five separate notes delivered to the five different agencies Saturday afternoon. Each of these notes gave the basic reason as to why the various facilities would have to close.

Upon receiving this information, Mr. Wauchope decided not to wait for amplification, but to start immediate action. He called **LT Richard B. Fahner, USN, Officer-in-Charge of the Naval Communications Unit at Kagnew Station**. Wauchope suggested that Fahner start thinking about the problems and details concerned with closing the station within the specified four-day period. Wauchope and Fahner agreed that the notice of immediate closure was not itself a big surprise. The possibility was anticipated due to the previous announcement by the U.S. Government of the desire to enter negotiations concerning the planned closing of Kagnew Station and the intention to reduce the MAAG staff in Addis Ababa. Both

agreed the EPMG had nothing to lose by telling the Americans to leave Ethiopia. On the other hand, expelling the Americans from Ethiopia would be a tremendous aid in negotiations with Eastern Bloc countries. It was decided to call a management meeting the next morning (Sunday) of Consulate and Kagnew key personnel.

LT Fahner contacted the Duty Officer at Tract Bravo (operational site) to inquire if the closure message had been received through Naval Communication channels. The message had not been received but word was left with the Duty Officer to contact Fahner as soon as the message arrived. After another planning conversation on the phone with Mr. Wauchope, Fahner called in **Radioman Chief Charles Walker**. Together they developed a check list of things to be accomplished the next day. Plans were developed on procedures and items to discuss during the management meeting scheduled for the next morning.

At about 2030, LT Fahner received an AUTOVON call from the **National Military Command Center (NMCC)**, inquiring as to how much equipment was located at Kagnew and the cube and total weight. Fahner informed NMCC that this information could not be obtained until the next morning due to curfew restrictions on travel between the tracts after 1930. NMCC said the information was needed as soon as possible to determine the number of airlifts required to evacuate equipment and personnel. By the casual nature of the call, it was obvious to LT Fahner that higher authority didn't anticipate any problems, and everything was "cool".

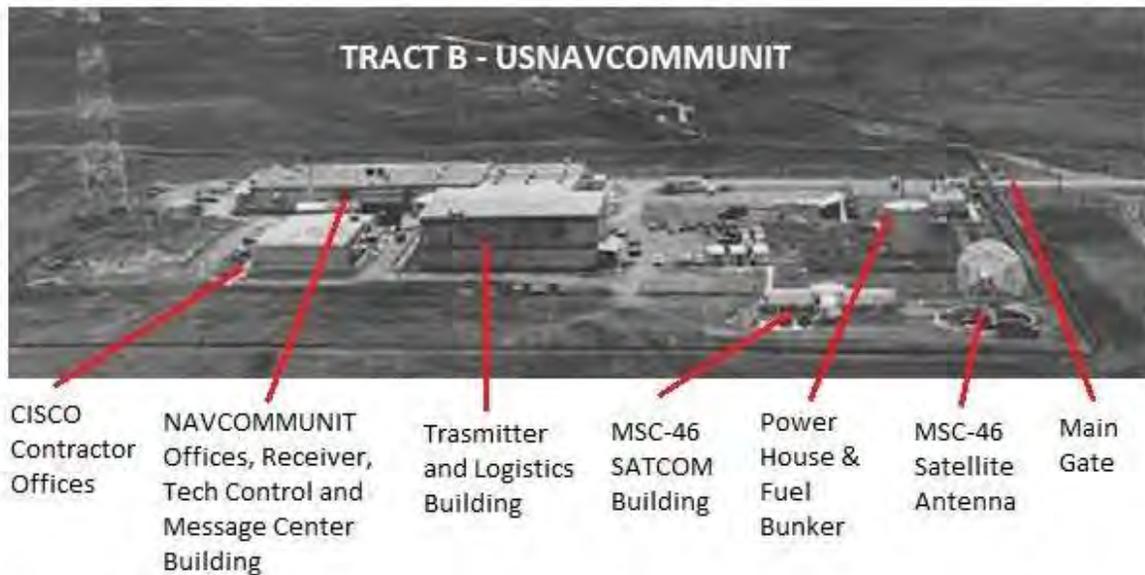
Later, LT Fahner began thinking of the previous situations in Asmara and the complete lack of direction demonstrated within the local EPMG ranks when even the smallest tasks were undertaken. He also knew of the proven lack of communication between the EPMG Headquarters in Addis Ababa and the Second Division EPMG troops in Asmara. Given this knowledge of the EPMG inadequacies and the normal misinterpretation of orders received from higher authority, Fahner decided to commence destruction of all non-essential cryptographic materials at Tract Bravo. He contacted the Duty Office at Tract Bravo and passed the order. The Duty Officer, **Radioman First Class Purvis**, then directed Radioman **Third Class Pete**

Woodward to commence destruction of all non-essential keying material and to prepare equipment and classified material for destruction. Thermite devices were placed on equipment racks and classified publications were placed in appropriate incendiary barrels. Igniting the thermite and incendiary devices would require evacuation of the building.

On many occasions throughout the night, publications required for circuit operation had to be retrieved from the incendiary barrels. The publication needed was seemingly always on the bottom of the stack. For Petty Officer Woodward, *“it was a long watch”*.

By 2145 the closure message had been received via Naval communications circuits and Mr. Wauchope had learned of a special bulletin broadcast on Addis Ababa radio about 2030. The bulletin indicated that only four of the U.S. agencies originally listed were to be closed, with the Consulate remaining open. From this broadcast it was obvious that EPMG troops in Addis Ababa and Asmara, as well as the general public, were aware of the situation.

LT Fahner received approximately 25 AUTOVON calls throughout the night, most of which were from various levels of the Military Command Authority. All were asking generally the same questions, primarily concerned with the dollar recovery of equipment. This contrasted with Fahner’s primary concern, the safety of personnel. It was obvious from the start, priorities of Fahner and Wauchope were different from those of higher authority. Not only did it appear there was little concern for personal safety but, as stated by Fahner, *“there was no concern for personnel safety”*, and *“there was no concern either Saturday or Sunday for classified material. The only concern seems to be the MYSTIC STAR and SATCOMM equipment.”*



Later that evening, **CINCUSNAVEUR** called and asked how long it would take to get the priority one equipment removed from Tract Bravo and ready for airlift. LT Fahner's answer was "24 hours or less". This triggered innumerable FLASH messages from seemingly every level of the military, all asking the cube and weight of equipment to be removed within the 24-hour period. While Fahner was interpreting priority one as cryptographic equipment, higher levels of command were thinking of the Presidential Terminal **MYSTIC STAR** and the Satellite Communications Terminal (AN/MSC-46).

The rest of Saturday night found LT Fahner and Mr. Wauchope trying to consider all the problems that could surface within the next four days and the best possible way to deal with them. Remembering problems encountered during the previous closing of the former transmitter site at Tract Delta, they knew there could be much more serious implications than anticipated by higher command.

24 APRIL 1977

THE SECOND DAY

Early Sunday morning all weapons were removed from Tract Echo and placed in the trunk of LT Fahner's car. Chief Walker had the responsibility of going to Tract Bravo to transmit several important messages and paraphrase all incoming traffic for Fahner. The original plan was for Walker to take Fahner's car with watch relief personnel to Tract Bravo and leave the weapons there. He was then to proceed to the Consulate and the management meeting. Things got a little confused and a last-minute decision resulted in Fahner taking his car directly to the Consulate and Walker taking his own car, with relief personnel, to Tract Bravo. The Chief arrived at Tract Bravo, completed the message processing, and left for the management meeting at the Consulate.

At 0700, the management meeting was called to order with the following present:

Mr. Keith L. Wauchope – American Consul General (acting)

Mr. Richard A, Johnson – American Consulate Administration Officer

Mr. Bradford W. Ham – American Consulate Communications Officer

LT Richard B. Fahner, USN, Kagnew Officer-in-Charge

RMC Charles (NMN) Walker, USN – Kagnew Chief-in- Charge

Mr. Edward Szczepanski – CISCO Project Manager (acting)

Mr. John P. Dundulis – Pacific Architect and Engineering Project Manager

**Mr. Robert C. Kammerling – Pacific Architect and Engineering Admin
Officer**

**Mr. Grant B. Francisco – Pacific Architect and Engineering Fire Chief and
Security Officer**

**SSGT Stephen D. Witt, USMC, Noncommissioned Officer-in-Charge,
Marine Corp Detachment**

The meeting began with listing priorities for actions to be accomplished. All agreed Priority One would be the destruction or removal of cryptographic equipment at Kagnew and the Consulate. Priority Two was the safety and welfare of American personnel including private citizens living in Asmara and the local employees of the two installations. Third, was U.S. Government property, other than cryptographic equipment; the last, personnel effects.

The meeting covered immediate problems of concern. A list was constructed of items to discuss when contact was made with the local government, e.g., documentation and exit permits for departing American personnel and Ethiopian dependents, status of two CISCO employees on leave in Massawa, and several minor concerns.

In the absence of instructions from local government authorities, no objections were anticipated during the four-day period. An Ethiopian radio report had assured complete cooperation. The U.S. Embassy in Addis scheduled a meeting for 0800 and it was anticipated that information from the meeting would arrive in Asmara prior to the end of management meeting, then in progress. Unfortunately, this did not turn out to be the case. Lacking guidance from Addis, the management personnel continued to brain-storm possible problems and recommended solutions.

During the meeting, the chain-of-command for contract personnel was altered significantly, Normally, LT Fahner had only liaison authority with **CISCO** personnel. Unresolved problems were forwarded to COMNAVELCOM and then to CISCO home office in Dallas, Texas. The home office would then contact the CISCO Project Manager in Asmara. Obviously, such a procedure would be too slow in this situation. Fahner needed full control over all personnel at Kagnew. Contract personnel were instructed to consider themselves as no longer a civilian organization, but as part of the U.S. Government Service. Fahner asserted that he was responsible for all operations at Kagnew and Mr. Wauchope for the overall evacuation. Each civilian manager was appointed Special Assistant to Fahner for

their respective areas. Before the meeting was adjourned Wauchope emphasized that the personal conduct of every individual could determine the safety and welfare of all.

LT Fahner arrived at Tract Bravo at 1000 and discovered there were no restrictions on entering the tract and everything was quote, *“normal”*. He had previously ordered Kagnew personnel to remain off the roads until it was known how the Ethiopia Provisional Military Government (EPMG) Second Division were going to react.

At 1015 the crew on watch, since 1720 the previous afternoon, was permitted to return to Tract Echo for some rest. They were leaving Tract Bravo in LT Fahner’s car when stopped and unexpectedly searched at the gate in violation of previous practice and treaty between the United States and the Government of Ethiopia. During the search, the truck was opened and inside were found five M2 rifles with 60 rounds of ammunition and a .45 caliber pistol with two clips of ammunition. At the sight of the weapons the EPMG guards became very excited and began *“jumping up and down and waving their guns around.”* Radioman Third Class Woodard, a calm individual, casually closed the trunk, slipped behind the wheel and backed into the compound. He opened the Message Center door and tossed the weapons and ammunition inside. This additional action thoroughly excited the guards. Petty Officer Woodard then walked into Fahner’s office and said, *“There’s a problem outside. The Ethi’s found a bunch of weapons in the car.”*

LT Fahner realized the problem generated from switching the cars and went out to the gate to calm the EPMG troops. He told them the incident was being resolved by their superiors. He realized even a minor mistake such as this could lead to a major incident. Shortly thereafter, Chief Walker and RMSN Brian Kempton tried to enter Tract Bravo, but were informed by the EPMG guard no one could enter or leave the Tract. They returned to Tract Echo to await further orders.

On Sunday it was nearly impossible to locate officials of the EPMG. The two-month period following Easter is the customary time for marriages in Ethiopia, and most marriages were held on Sundays. This made it extremely difficult to contact anyone in authority, as they were all attending weddings.

The first person contacted of any authority, was **Mr. Assafaw, the Director General of the Foreign Affairs Branch Office in Asmara**. He has never been very effective in the past and knew nothing of the upcoming closure. He gave Mr. Wauchope a phone number where he could be located, but he could not be contacted for the remainder of the day.

A senior local employee of the Consulate offered his assistance and finally contacted the Second Division Duty Officer. The Duty Officer was asked to contact someone in authority that could resolve the movement restriction at Kagnew. The Duty Officer contacted **Colonel Addis, Chief-of-Staff**, who said he would take measures to ease the restrictions at Kagnew Station. Apparently, this was done because the Americans were eventually allowed to leave and enter Tract Bravo.

LT Fahner contacted Chief Walker and told him to report to Tract Bravo. Again, they were denied entry. It was now obvious that orders were being given to the EPMG guards by sources other than Colonel Addis.

Between 1030 and 1100, **Mr. Dundulis** informed LT Fahner that one of Mr. Dundulis' contacts was a member of a recently formed "Committee" that was responsible for supervising and coordinating the closeout. This individual was lacking information, which proved to be invaluable, and allowed the Americans to remain one step ahead of the committee. The plans of the committee were drastically different from those publicized by the EPMG in Addis. It was also apparent the committee issued orders to the EPMG gate guards in direct contradiction to Colonel Addis. Mr. Wauchope asked if he would be able to discuss knowledgably the procedures for closing the Consulate and Kagnew Station. He said he could, and would arrive at the Consulate around 1300 that afternoon.

Mr. Abraham Mebrathu arrived and promised the full cooperation of the Ethiopian Government during the closeout. He gave general assurances, rather than details or specifics. Mr. Wauchope discussed the anticipated problems with the exit documents, particularly American dependents who were Ethiopian Nationals. There was the remaining question of two CISCO personnel on leave in Massawa. Abraham assured Wauchope there would be no problems and he would answer all questions as soon as possible. He also provided phone numbers where he could be

reached the rest of the day, but when the problem of entry restrictions came up again, Mebrathu could not be located.

Altogether, there were four Ethiopian officials who played major roles during the closure. Mr. Abraham Mebrathu, Assistant Director of the Foreign Office; Mr. Assafaw, Director General of the Foreign Office; Mr. Mengesha Gesesse, Chairman of the Closeout Committee; and **Captain Cadoni, Ethiopia Provisional Military Government**, designated Liaison Officer for Kagnew and member of the Closeout Committee.

By now, operations at both tracts were adjusting to constant change. Chief Walker was placed in charge of Tract Echo and was directed to inform LT Fahner and Mr. Wauchope of any overt hostile actions towards Americans. Fahner was very concerned about safety of his people at Tract Echo because the Tract was co-located with the Second Division, and it was not known how the Second Division Troops would react. Being Sunday, the troops were not employed in constructive work.

During the early afternoon there were innumerable FLASH message from CINCUSNAVEUR, asking many different questions. There were so many, so fast, no time was available to answer, however a large majority of the questions were already answered during prior preparations for a planned phase-out. These were well documented and had been forwarded to the commands that were then asking the same questions. CINCUSNAVEUR COMMPLANN 4350 had listed most of the answers for many years.

By this time, it appeared to LT Fahner that higher authorities in the military hierarchy were not coordinating with each other. If all intra-service inquiries would have been forwarded to the appropriate coordinating authority, CINCUSNAVEUR, the confusion would have been substantially reduced. To Fahner it seemed that *“everyone wanted a pie of the pie.”*

LT Fahner began originating traffic describing the on-scene situation. He essentially ignored the stream of technical questions being asked in messages because he did not have the time to answer them. He realized higher authority had a different listing for priority of items, so he originated a message stating he considered

Priority One to be crypto equipment which could adversely affect national security or compromised. There was neither an acknowledgment or disagreement with his position. Higher authority remained primarily concerned with MYSTIC STAR and SATCOMM.



The steady stream of message traffic continued. Questions concerned with equipment removal were based on what higher authority thought was a permissive atmosphere at Kagnev, which was not the case at all. Regardless of the many messages originated by LT Fahner, or how differently they were worded, higher authority still seemed to believe the permissive atmosphere prevailed.

About 1500 that afternoon, Mr. Wauchope contacted Mr. Abraham Mebrathu and protested the restrictions on equipment to be removed from Tract Bravo. He also reported through State Department channels the restrictions on equipment removal and said the Consulate was prepared for emergency destruction if necessary. He further advised State it was clear the local officials lacked specific instructions on how they should handle the closeout. It was believed the EPMG Commander at Tract Bravo was taking it upon himself to issue contradicting orders. The Commander's troops had been guarding Tract Bravo for years and wanted to ensure they received part of the spoils.

Until communications were secured that evening, LT Fahner remained on the voice orderwire with CINCUSNAVEUR in London. He evidently failed to get the urgency of the situation across, since higher authority continued to explore the "what if's", i.e., if you got an extension..., if you got three more days..., if you got fifteen more days..., what could be accomplished? During this time, Fahner was desperately trying to supervise destruction of highly classified matter and make appropriate on-the-scene decisions.

By now, CINCUSNAVEUR had directed LT Fahner to commence immediate disassembly of the MYSTIC STAR equipment. A team of knowledgeable personnel was formed to execute the task. The team's actions were later halted for security reasons.

LT Fahner received a call from Mr. Dundulis informing him of what the committee had planned for the next day. There was to be an inspection and inventory of the buildings. The inspection was clearly a violation of the cooperative spirit directed by the Government in Addis. Fahner realized the crunch was on for the complete emergency destruction prior to the inspection and to insure no evidence remained. He immediately halted disassembly of the MYSTIC STAR, because of its ready visibility during the inspection.

At approximately 1500, Mr. Wauchope reestablished contact with Mr. Abraham Mebrathu protesting the pending inspection of Tract Bravo. He told Mebrathu that any government has secure materials and it was their obligation to insure this material was not compromised. Mebrathu appeared sympathetic to this point of view and didn't see any reason why his government would want to confiscate equipment or material. He said he would contact the Chief Administrator and discuss the matter.

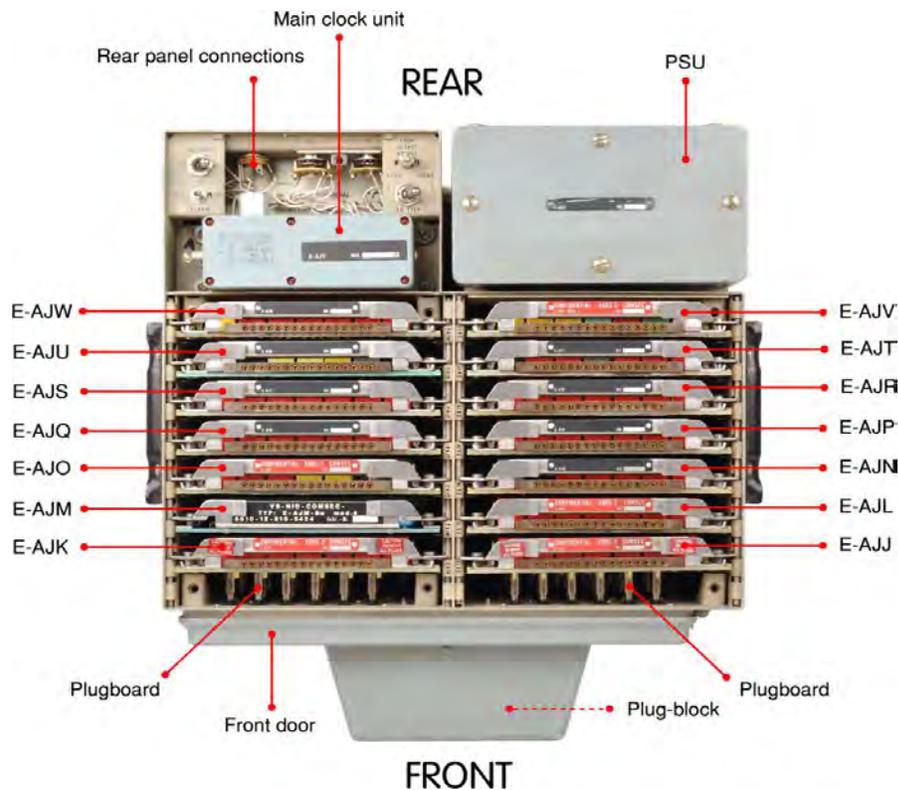
Immediately afterward, it occurred to Mr. Wauchope that his protests might speed up activity against the Americans. There were rumors that Cuban advisors arrived in Asmara on Sunday, and it was not known how much the Soviets might be behind the closure. It was assumed by the inspection being directed only at Tract Bravo, clearly an operational site, they knew what they were going after. Shortly after 1500, Mr. Mebrathu called the Consulate responding to the protest. His information was very vague and non-specific. He said he was consulting with higher authority and would call again when he had more information.

Meanwhile, at Tract Bravo, a chaotic situation was worsened by the tremendous amount of classified material to be destroyed, even after destroying all non-essential files a few weeks before during normal house cleaning. It was apparent they had to start reducing circuits to remove and destroy the classified equipment. Plans were to pull the equipment from the racks, remove the classified components, and stack the cabinets on the junk pile in the backroom. The deck as then to be waxed, presenting the appearance of an empty space, equipment never having been installed. These plans were on the assumption they would be permitted to continue working all night at a steady pace.

LT Fahner passed to CINCUSNAVEUR the information that the committee was to arrive the next morning and had instructed them not to destroy or remove anything. The indication was that personnel would be in danger if there was any appearance of destruction. He also stated his desire to reduce circuits to pull the remaining crypto equipment and prepare it for destruction. CINCUSNAVEUR asked how long it would take to destroy the remaining material and equipment. Fahner responded with, “two hours”.

After waiting what seemed to be hours (the actual time was probably less than five minutes), he was informed the decision was being referred to Washington and they would call back in twenty to thirty minutes. LT Fahner was confident higher authority would accept the decision to reduce the number of circuits required.

Following the phone conversation LT Fahner met with **Mr. Szczepanski**. They thoroughly went over the destruction plan and discussed techniques they could use to destroy the equipment since the thermite devices could not be used. Fahner hit a KW-7 circuit board with an ax and it “just bounced off”.



KW-7: interior view showing the multiple circuit boards installed

It was evident they were in deep trouble as there were 250 circuit cards to destroy and they needed to start now! They agreed it would take all night to destroy the cards. Szczepanski had a blow torch in his locker and said it could be used to melt the solder connections on the back of the cards and modules then could be pulled off by hand. KW-7's were being moved to the other end of the building where destruction was to take place and a team was formed to disassemble them.



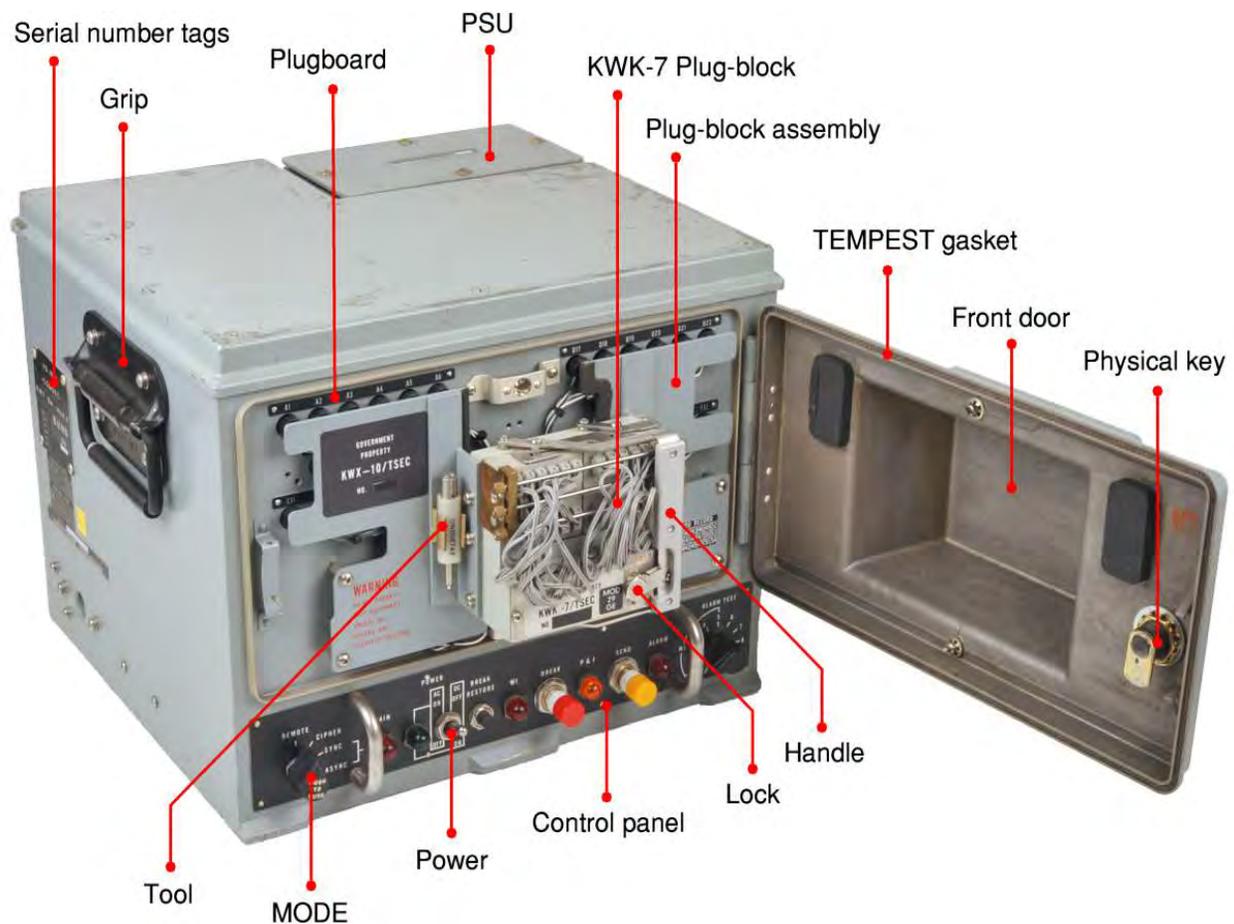
KWX-10 Card Reader

The KWX-10's and circuit boards were removed and the cabinets were stacked on top of the junk pile. Mr. Szczepanski and **Mr. Brownell** were busy setting up the torch, but needed additional attachments located in the SATCOMM Building.

Mr. Brownell was returning from the SATCOMM Building, having located the parts, when an EPMG Captain-of-the-Guard and an interpreter approached him. They said they wanted to talk to someone in charge. Mr. Szczepanski was standing at the door to let Mr. Brownell in and Brownell told the interpreter that Szczepanski was the man in charge. Brownell then went inside to finish setting up the torch. The interpreter told Szczepanski that he and the rest of the Americans had ten minutes to leave the Tract.

Mr. Szczepanski then went inside and told LT. Fahner. They both realized there was no way they could abandon the building in ten minutes, even if they dropped everything they were doing and walked out. KW-7's were still in the process of being disassembled and the torch wasn't completely set up.

LT Fahner went outside and asked what the problem was. The only response was “you got ten minutes to get off the Tract. You can take personal things but nothing else.” He told them that ten minutes was ridiculous and impossible. He said there were 15 people in the building. They had planned to spend the night, and with all the personal effects inside, there was no way they could be out of the building within ten minutes. He said they would have to wait until more vehicles could be sent from Tract Echo to accommodate all personnel. He told them that he needed at least thirty minutes. The EPMG Captain didn’t agree and continued shaking his head “no”, insisting on the ten-minute departure. Fahner said they couldn’t get out in ten minutes and there was no further need for discussion. As he turned to leave he said they would get out as soon as they could. There was no doubt in Fahner’s mind, the Captain had definite orders from higher authority.



KW-7 Electronic Cipher Encryption Machine

LT Fahner passed the crises to CINCUSNAVEUR and explained they still had all the equipment to destroy. He then directed the KW-7's be pulled, and the circuits shut down. The remaining KW-7's disassembled; the classified cards and components were then thrown under cable trays to hide them from sight. The shredded material, weapons and ammunition were also hidden in cable trays. The area was swept and thoroughly cleaned. When they left, it looked as though they had just walked out, and nothing remained to indicate what had happened. There was a remote possibility they might obtain permission to return.

Due to the mentality of the EPMG, LT Fahner speculated it would take months, possibly even years, before the EPMG lifted the cable trays to look inside. Nearly all documents, publications, files, etc. had either been shredded or burned during the day. The only questionable material remaining was a small stack of what was believed to have been unclassified technical manuals. This material was disbursed under the cable trays along with the shredded material but as far as it can be determined, was never retrieved. As previously noted, all crypto publications and keying material were definitely destroyed and verified.

The additional vehicles from Tract Echo were directed by the EPMG guards to remain outside the Tract Bravo gate and those personnel who walked thru the gate received a body search for their trouble. The number of EPMG troops had noticeably increased around Tract Bravo; fifteen or twenty were at the gate and still more were scattered throughout the compound. Usually only one or two guards were at the gate and never any inside the fence.

The conversation on the way to Tract Echo could best be characterized as convulsed with rage. The EPMG was talking from both sides of their mouth, saying it would fully cooperate yet frequently reverting to hostile tactics. They had ordered the Americans out of the country by a specified deadline and then prematurely taken over a U.S. Facility.

During the actual evacuation, the only means of communication between the Consulate and Tract Bravo was by radio relay through Tract Echo. Word was relayed to the Consulate when the ten-minute warning had occurred and when personnel departed Tract Bravo.

The seizure of Tract Bravo confirmed Mr. Wauchope's belief that the EPMG Committee knew it was an operational site and were contemplating on the inheritance of sophisticated communications equipment, if they moved quickly. Later, however, this seemed considerably less likely. Wauchope was convinced the ten-minute evacuation order was issued at a much higher level than the Second Division Commander. It was speculated that those giving the order were hostile towards the U.S., more sophisticated than the Ethiopians, and could operate the equipment.

It was evident that there were many misconceptions by Ethiopians as to what Kagnew Station did. Some thought it provided communications to the EPMG. The Second Division Commander wanted Kagnew to provide him with photographs of Northern Ethiopia taken from satellites. He never believed the Satellite terminal was strictly for communications, and was totally convinced the Satellite was relaying photo intelligence through Kagnew as it passed overhead. Others actually believed the radome covering the SATCOMM antenna covered an underground tunnel leading to the United States; and last, but not least, some believed the United States had a secret submarine base beneath Ethiopia and the radome was the entrance.

The senior local employee of the Consulate was unsuccessfully trying to reestablish contact with Mr. Mebrathu. Mr. Wauchope had started drafting a flash message informing higher authority of the ten-minute warning. He also telephoned Ambassador Tienken and promised to keep him informed of the situation. By the time Wauchope finished drafting his message, additional information arrived from Tract Echo stating everyone had left Tract Bravo and there were no casualties or confrontations. This information was then incorporated into the message.

While all this was taking place, Mr. Mebrathu called and said there was no reason to worry about Tract Bravo, the Americans would have the full cooperation of the EPMG. At this, Mr. Wauchope was a little *"put out"*. He told Mebrathu his government had already seized Tract Bravo in total violation of all assurances given. Wauchope demanded the Americans be permitted to return to Tract Bravo as soon as possible as he knew there was a very slim chance, if any, of returning to the tract.

Mebrathu seemed genuinely stunned by the situation and appeared not to have had any prior knowledge of the seizure. He said he didn't know what to do, but would call the Chief Administrator and try to solve the problem. He wasn't heard from again until late that evening.

The seizure of Tract Bravo definitely set the ground rules for future actions in the Consulate. With Tract Bravo being a communications facility, it was feared it might occur to the EPMG that the Consulate might have similar communications capabilities and the possibility of seizing the Consulate was apparent. Mr. Wauchope ordered Consulate personnel to immediately commence destruction of classified communications equipment, leaving only in-use equipment. All classified files and most of the small arms were destroyed. The Consulate's Regional Communications Office in Nairobi agreed with the destruction of classified equipment after Wauchope convinced them the situation warranted such measures.

To explain the prevalent atmosphere in Ethiopia, it should be pointed out in September 1976 and building to a crescendo after the Sudanese conflict with Ethiopia in late December through February, charges of CIA involvement in Ethiopia were loud and frequent. During a rally at which the Ethiopian Chief-of-State appeared in mid-April, he took a vial of what was supposed to be blood and poured it out, saying, *"so also shall the blood of the enemies of the revolution flow."* He then cited Sudan, Saudi Arabia and American imperialism. With this in mind, it was assumed the Americans standing with the EPMG was, to say the least, not very good. If the EPMG could, in any way, link the Consulate or Americans in Ethiopia with CIA activities, they would certainly try to do so; especially, now that the Americans were leaving. This would help prove the allegations made by the Chief-of-State concerning the CIA. For this reason, Mr. Wauchope ordered most of the weapons destroyed. Twenty-eight firearms at the Consulate were slightly more than needed for the six Marine Guards. They were all legitimate arms and were destroyed in phases in a sequence to maintain security until the last possible minute. If they left behind the EPMG might try to tie them to support allegations of the Chief-of-State.

Another incident that occurred Sunday morning at Tract Echo, demonstrating the alertness of the EPMG for any overt destruction, was when **RMSN Kempton**, not wanting to leave his motorcycle in running condition, knocked three holes in the engine with a hammer. Immediately, three EPMG Military Policemen jumped the fence and stormed into the barracks, wanting to know what was being destroyed. They didn't see the motorcycle. After that, Chief Walker directed personnel not to play radios, tape recorders, or say anything above a whisper.

Mr. Mebrathu called Mr. Wauchope that evening between 2030 and 2100. He said at 8:30 the next morning there was to be a meeting at Tract Echo. He wanted to talk with Wauchope and LT Fahner concerning the turnover of Kagnev and that the meeting would be chaired by **Mr. Mengesha Gesesse**. Wauchope had some previous knowledge of Gesesse, although Gesesse had not been in contact with the Consulate since his arrival in Asmara several months before. His title was Chief Political Advisor to the Chief Administrator and due to his apparent influence, was probably a member of the **DIRG**. He frequently spoke on behalf of the DIRG during rallies in Asmara and had a reputation of being intelligent, shrewd and thoroughly ruthless. Mebrathu assured Wauchope that Tract Bravo would be discussed in detail during the meeting.

Mr. Wauchope then received a message from higher authority suggesting Americans be evacuated immediately since there didn't appear to be any chance of removing the equipment. Wauchope spoke with Ambassador Tienken concerning the message and sent a reply stating that an immediate evacuation was unwise, and recommended Americans remain in Asmara until after the meeting scheduled for the following morning. Ambassador Tienken supported Wauchope's point of view.

That evening there were outgoing artillery rounds, evidently to suppress an insurgent rocket attack in the Southwestern part of town. Mr. Wauchope did not report this because under ordinary conditions it would not have applied, and it was contemplated that higher authority would misinterpret and relate it to the closeout, which by no means appeared to be relative. The possibility of over-reaction by higher authority was perceptible.

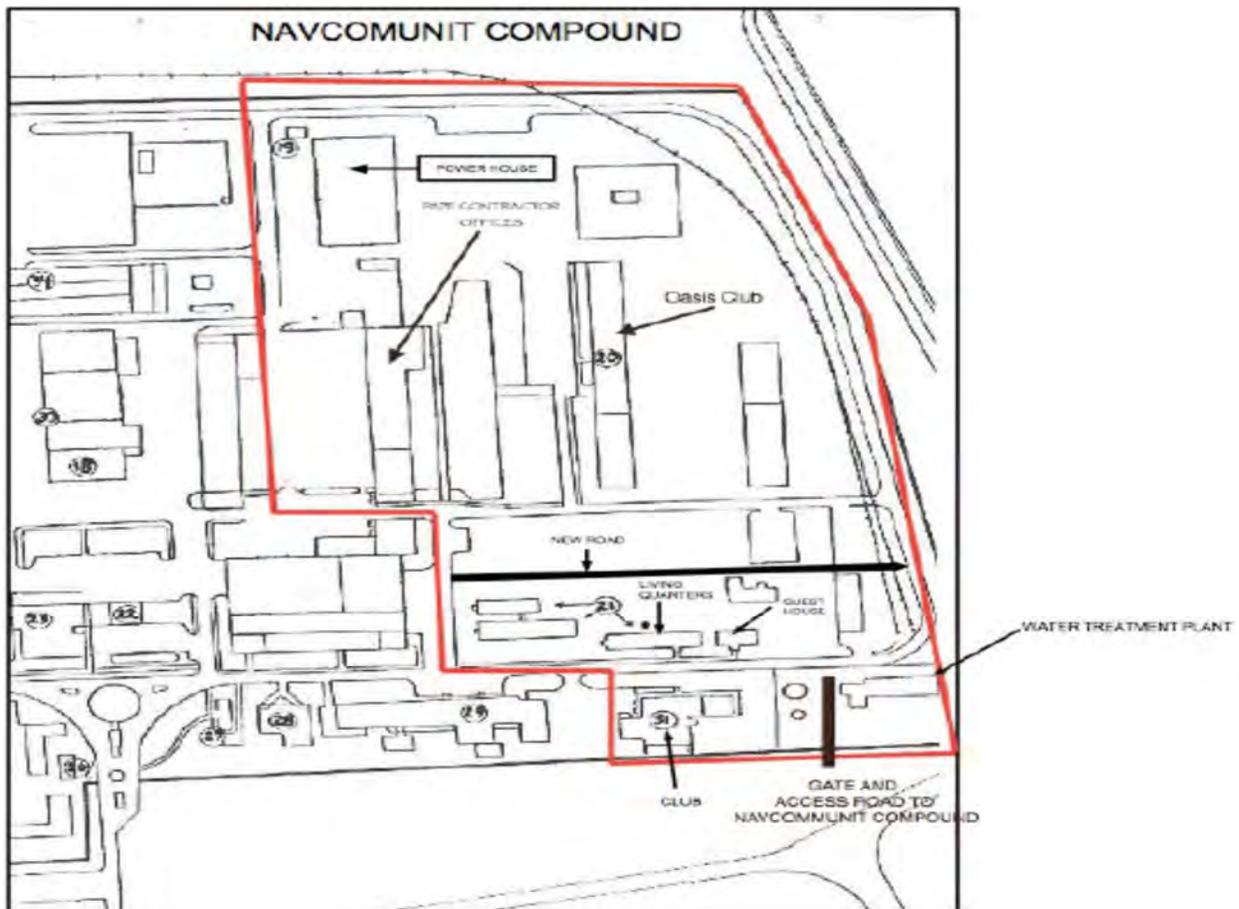
During the remainder of Sunday evening there was time for the Americans to reflect over the extraordinary activities of the day. Other personnel were packing and trying to second-guess the outcome of the meeting scheduled for the following morning. The ball was now in EPMG's court and the entire ballgame hinged on the upcoming, vital meeting.

25 APRIL 1977

THE THIRD DAY

The American flag greeted the sunrise Monday morning, for the first time in ages. The flag normally remained neatly folded and stowed so as not to advertise American locations to the insurgent forces. Today's exception was purely psychological. Having the upper hand, the EPMG attitude towards the Americans was one of increasing arrogance. With this in mind, Mr. Wauchope directed the flag be flown in all its splendor. Inferior or not, the American presence in Ethiopia was powerfully announced by flying the stars and stripes.

NAVCOMUNIT COMPOUND – TRACT E – Kagnev Station, Asmara



A short brief was held in LT Fahner's quarters prior to the scheduled meeting at the Tract Echo Club. Present at the brief were Mr. Wauchope, Fahner, Chief Walker, Dundulis, Szczepanski, and **Mr. Francisco**. Wauchope discussed what he anticipated would be covered during the meeting.

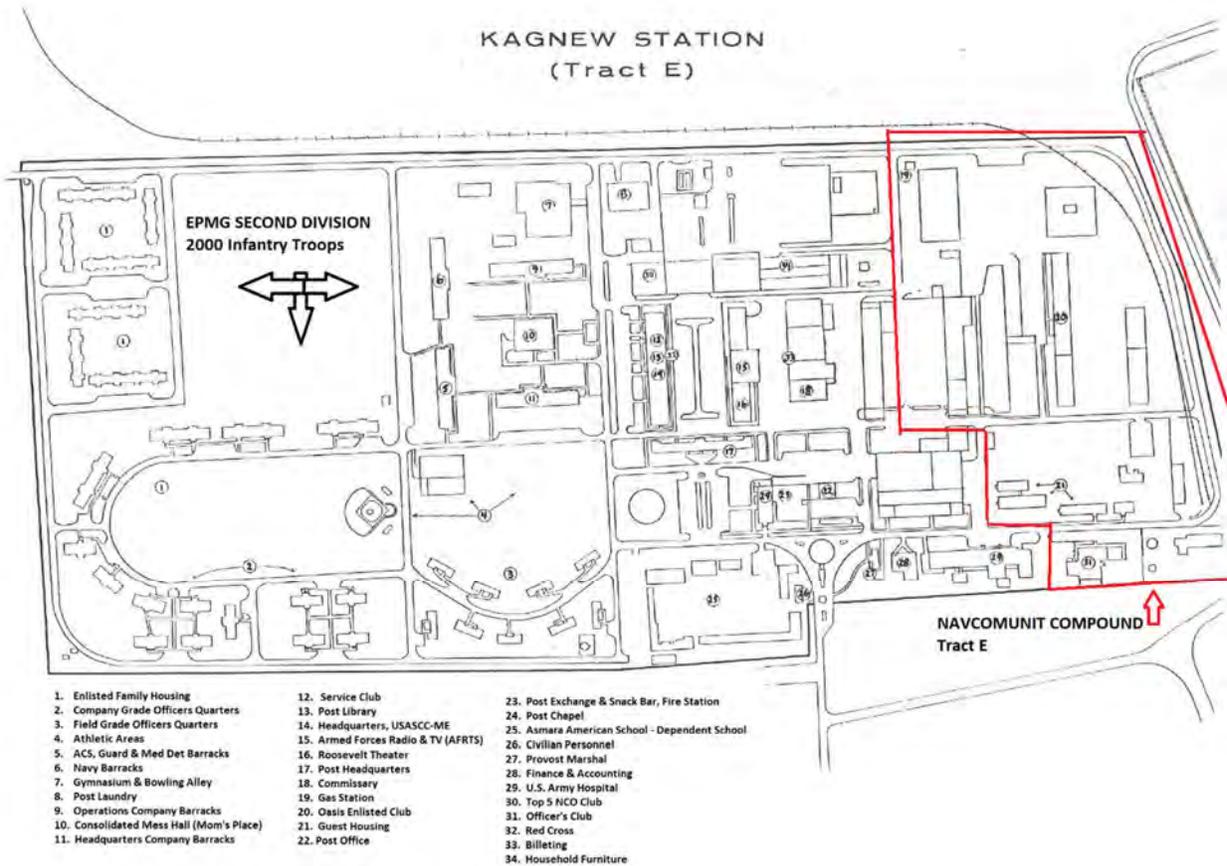
Shortly thereafter, the American adjourned to the former Kagnev Station Officers Club and prepared to host the meeting with the Ethiopia delegation. The psychological alertness of the Americans was again evident when it was suggested that the table to be used for the meeting be set up in such a manner that only a portion of the EPMG delegation could be seated. This would start the meeting making the EPMG delegation ill at ease.

The delegation finally arrived about ten minutes late and this was the initial meeting for the Americans with Mengesha Gesesse. Other members of the delegation included Mr. Abraham Mebrathu of the Foreign Office, Captain Cadoni the Liaison Officer, two Customs Officials, and four Military Officers of the Ethiopian armed services.

The Americans sat down at the table and invited the Ethiopia members to do the same. The meeting went pretty much the way Mr. Wauchope had anticipated. Mengesha said his government would fully cooperate during the closeout of the facilities and expected the same from the Americans. Wauchope protested that their government activity in relationship to Tract Bravo was in violation of the 1953 agreement and more importantly, contrary to the assurance of the Addis and Asmara government representatives. Mengesha simply shrugged at this and made a small note in his notebook.

The next point of consideration was the restriction of movement of American personnel between Tracts. Now, Mengesha said the restrictions on movement had been lifted and the Americans could enter and leave the Tracts, but were to be searched and could only take personal effects. The delegation announced Customs Officials would inspect the belongings to be shipped, at a time convenient to both parties. It was agreed the Americans would have the entire day, Monday, to collect personal effects and the inspections would start on Tuesday. The meeting ended with the request of the delegation that they be given a tour of the installations.

After leaving the Club, the Americans were prepared to cooperate but not be subservient. They asked the delegation members if they wanted a walk-through tour of the installations. They said that wasn't necessary.... that merely pointing out what each building was would suffice.



The buildings close to the Club were identified and the remainder were described during the motorcade that followed. The Americans believe the entire tour was designed to humiliate them and was “*sort of a surrender ceremony*”.

The Americans asked the delegation if they wanted to see Tract Bravo. They indicated they would. At this, LT Fahner told Mr. Wauchope he didn't want them to go to Tract Bravo in fear they might discover evidence of the previous destruction. They agreed to conduct the tour in the same manner they had at Tract Echo and remain outside the building.

Arriving at Tract Bravo, the American stopped at the gate, hoping the delegation would do the same. They did, and everyone got out of their vehicles. They were given a panoramic description of the buildings. This was acceptable to the delegation. It was then suggested that in one hour's time, another meeting be held at Tract Echo to discuss the closeout of the Consulate.

LT Fahner then returned to Tract Echo to coordinate the Packout of Navy personnel and of the CISCO employees whose personnel effects were bring brought to the Tract from the housing area. Plans were drafted, and key people assigned for the actual loading of the aircraft on Wednesday morning.

At the second meeting, the Ethiopia delegation again, took a firm stand. They insisted that everything removed from the Consulate would be inspected. Mr. Wauchope asked if files relating to finance, personnel, and claims could be retained because without them, local claims could not be resolved. This was accepted by the delegation. Wauchope also asked if high value office machines could be removed. They said they would take this under consideration and discuss it with higher authority. It was agreed that the Customs inspection for personnel effects of the Consulate would follow the inspection of Kagnew effects on Tuesday morning.

Later Mr. Wauchope had several discussions with the Embassy in Addis. He spoke with Ambassador Tienken who was trying to make an appointment with the Foreign Minister of Ethiopia to determine, among other things, it if was possible to return to Tract Bravo to remove equipment. Wauchope and LT Fahner tried to convey to the Ambassador by phone the atmosphere that prevailed in Asmara. According to Wauchope and Fahner there didn't seem to be any reason to go back to Tract Bravo since government equipment could not be removed. And by going back to Tract Bravo, there was the possibility that the EPMG might become aware of what the Americans considered valuable equipment. This philosophical approach to the situation, by making no immediate demands for any specific equipment and the false careless attitude adopted by the Americans, seemed to de-sensitize the predicament.

During the rest of the afternoon and evening there was a series of discussions concerning the mandatory inspection of property leaving the Consulate. This was

discussed as a matter of concern with the State Department and considered unacceptable. Mr. Wauchope received a message from the Department pointing out what sections of the Vienna Convention and the 1952 agreement were being violated. Wauchope hoped pressure concerning the violations would be brought against the EPMG at the State Department or Embassy levels, because it was evident that local officials did not understand the rules and agreements of diplomacy. Wauchope also received direction from the Department to approach the government on the violations and to specify sections to which the Ethiopians were signatory. He received a call from the Assistant Secretary for Africa asking if the violations had been protested. Wauchope told him they had been protested, to the highest degree possible in Asmara

Mr. Wauchope discovered upon his arrival in Athens that diplomatic approaches by the Department were made to other African governments in an effort to pressure the Ethiopian Government and to caution them that diplomatic violations would adversely affect them in many ways. The sensitive issue of the **Organization of African Unity**, located in Addis, was also emphasized by other African Governments.

26 APRIL 1977

THE FOURTH DAY

Shortly after 0800 Tuesday morning the customs inspection of personal effects began at Tract Echo. The Customs Officials were very serious about their authority and told the American that only one of each item could be cleared. Items not cleared were set aside and considered spoils; to later become the property of the officials. This was reported to the Consulate which in turn reported it to the Director General of the Foreign Office. Mr. Wauchope told the Director that this behavior was "*barbaric*". The Director seemed annoyed by this and didn't understand why his Government had gone to such extremes. Wauchope demanded that the Director contact the Chief Administrator on the matter and said he was suspending the customs inspection until the matter was resolved.

At 1030 Mr. Wauchope received word that Mengesha and Mr. Mebrathu were at Tract Echo. It was evident that these two men were currently the effective policy makers in Asmara. Wauchope had been trying to contact them all morning. Wauchope went to Tract Echo and asked them if they would consider another meeting; they agreed. Mengesha had already toned down the inspectors considerably and had evidently gone to Tract Echo at the request of the Director General.

During the meeting Mr. Wauchope presented the appropriate section of the Vienna Convention and the 1953 Agreement to Mr. Mengesha and Mr. Mebrathu. He explained and read paragraphs to which their Government was signatory. Mengesha handed them to Abraham saying there was no problem on this and all personnel holding diplomatic passports would not be subject to inspection, but that the Marines assigned to the Consulate would be. The question of Marines having immunity while assigned diplomatic duties has been negotiable for some time. They also agreed that all personal effects of Kagnew personnel could leave Ethiopia.

Near the close of the meeting, to the surprise of the Americans, Mengesha said Kagnew personnel could return to Tract Bravo and remove all the equipment they wanted. The only requirement was that the equipment had to be removed in the presence of EPMG guards, inspected after it was removed, and nothing was to be destroyed. Recalling the closure of Tract Delta when windows were broken, toilet fixtures smashed, etc., it was obvious that the EPMG concern was for the facility and not necessarily the equipment. The Americans agreed to these requirements without hesitation. LT Fahner immediately left the meeting and commenced forming a detail to remove the equipment. Time was a major factor since they were still scheduled to leave the following day.

The meeting continued with all items being agreed to by the EPMG. When the problem of the two CISCO employees still in Massawa was brought up, Mr. Wauchope was told they would arrive by plane the next afternoon. However, this didn't turn out to be the case.

After the meeting, Consulate personnel returned to the Consulate and immediately started removing Government equipment, while a short distance away, LT Fahner and detail, accompanied by Captain Cadoni, arrived at Tract Bravo intending to immediately start removing the MYSTIC STAR equipment. They assumed they would not be permitted to work through the customary lunch hours and would have to complete their work by 1300.

Since the door had been locked, access to the building was gained from the roof by removing a vent previously constructed as a vantage point for observing firefights near the Tract. Once inside, all personnel agreed that there was no evidence of forced entry and that the EPMG had not gained access to the building during the American's absence. (This suggests the voices heard after the evacuation on Sunday by higher authority, from the microphone left keyed by LT Fahner, must have come from outside the building.) Captain Cadoni was startled when the door was opened from the inside by the man having entered from the roof.

Under close observation, LT Fahner and crew started sawing and cutting the cables connecting the MYSTIC STAR equipment. Every time Fahner moved, Cadoni was right behind him. He soon abandoned the idea of retrieving the cryptographic

equipment. By 12:30 they had complete removed the essential components of the MYSTIC STAR and the KY-38. As suspected, Cadoni said *“that’s it, time for me to go eat lunch”*.



KY-38 Voice Encryption System



Under the watchful eyes of the EPMG troops at Tract Echo, they arrived with the equipment at approximately 1300. The curiosity of the troops resulted in the posting of an American guard on the truck that evening. To avoid any problem at the airport, LT Fahner demanded the equipment be inspected and sealed immediately. The Custom Officials had only inspected about half of the equipment when they said in disgust, *“go on, take it... take anything you want”*. The constant pressures by Chief Walker during the day had evidently worn them out. This attitude also prevailed the following morning when their only words were *“take it”*.

Later during a phone conversation with Ambassador Tienken, LT Fahner was asked how long an extension he would need to remove the essential equipment that remained. His answer was *“two days”*. The Ambassador told Fahner the Ethiopian Government was to decide at 1800 that evening whether or not to grant an extension and he needed information to know how many days to ask for.

Shortly before 1800 the Ambassador called Mr. Wauchope and told him the extension had been granted. Wauchope immediately contacted Mengesha and asked him if he was aware that his Government had granted the extension and that several American would be remaining in Asmara another 48 hours. Wauchope said that they wanted to use this time constructively by returning to Tract Bravo to

remove additional equipment. Mengesha checked with Addis and told Wauchope he had confirmed the extension. He said he would permit Kagnev personnel to return to Tract Bravo and remove the additional equipment as requested. Wauchope said he wanted to continue with the existing plan to evacuate a portion of the personnel and effects on the flight scheduled the next day. He said Fahner and a detail of men would return to Tract Bravo after loading the aircraft. Mengesha agreed and seemed to be fully cooperative.

That evening LT Fahner discreetly chose the personnel he wanted to remain behind and complete the additional removal of equipment. Mr. Wauchope did the same with the Consulate personnel.

27 APRIL 1977

THE FIFTH DAY

The first flight on Wednesday was to land at 1130. A very precise schedule had been developed as to how the remaining time would be utilized. Consulate and Kagnev personnel scheduled to leave that day would be convoyed by the EPMG guards from Tract Echo to the airport. The plane would then be loaded and when completed, LT Fahner would go to Tract Bravo where a team disconnecting the installed equipment would be working. The possibility existed that the EPMG Troops had not yet received the word on the extension, so a small contingent of personnel was left at Tract Echo to prevent, if possible, the EPMG Troops moving in and occupying the quarters.

Earlier, when the disconnect team arrived at Tract Bravo, they were informed that everything to be removed was to be inventoried by the EPMG. Chief Walker, heading the team, had in his possession a COMNAVTELCOM message specifying the 21 pieces of equipment to be removed. The heading and classification had been removed for security reasons. Upon arrival the power system alarm bell was ringing; evidently judging from their expressions, the EPMG guards thought something was getting ready to blow up. Mr. Dundulis swiftly secured the alarm.

The list of 21 items was given to Mengesha, but every item on the list still needed to be pointed out by name. Only 18 items were pointed out as the remaining three were never installed in the Satellite terminal.

As the inspection party left the terminal Chief Walker directed two men to start disconnecting the OCV equipment, while the inspection party continued to the transmitter van. Mengesha immediately stopped this and said nothing was to be removed now; only inventoried. The inventory continued in a rather amusing fashion. In each instance when an equipment cabinet was opened, and a specific item pointed out, Mengesha insisted the cabinet door be reclosed and secured as it was before.

After the inventory was complete, Mengesha said it would be approximately twenty minutes before they could start removing equipment. It was required that he contact higher authority to confirm the removal, but there should be no problems getting the authority to do so. Mr. Dundulis, knowledgeable of the local language, overheard the phone conversation between Mengesha and an Ethiopia Air Force Major in Addis Ababa. Mengesha told the Major to ensure that the authorities in Addis Ababa understood, and if one piece of equipment was removed from the Satellite van, the entire Satellite terminal would then be inoperable.

While waiting for confirmation from Addis Ababa, Chief Walker led the group to the Operations building and again gained entry through the roof. Once inside they began to inventory the equipment. Since the Americans were nearly out of food, Chief Walker asked if they could take the C-rations that were stored in the building. Mengesha said yes without hesitation.

They went to the Administration building, but did not have a key to get inside. Trying to remember all the equipment located within the building, Chief Walker started rattling off equipment nomenclature, half factual and half fiction, to Mengesha who had been writing everything down during the inspection. The entire inventory was then sent to Addis Ababa by telegram. Chief Walker suspected a communications specialist was available in Addis Ababa to review the list.

Later, still waiting on word from Addis Ababa, lunch time was announced and since it would be 1430 or 1500 before word would arrive from Addis Ababa, all personnel were ordered to return to Tract Echo and wait. It was obvious the inventory was strictly for the EPMG benefit and knowledgeable personnel were probably discussing the list right then in Addis Ababa. The EPMG troops were still ignorant of the cryptographic equipment disassembled and scattered under the floor in the back room of the Operations building. It was also apparent that the EPMG was trying to find out what the Americans identified as being important.

Mr. Wauchope received word while at the airport on the securing of the equipment removal at Tract Bravo. He instructed the Consulate to contact Mengesha. The Consulate did, and Mengesha said he wanted to see Wauchope as soon as possible.

Mr. Wauchope went directly to the Government building in Asmara. While there he noticed the list of 21 items Chief Walked had given Mengesha earlier. Mengesha told Wauchope he saw no problem removing the items listed and they could start again at 1500 that afternoon. Wauchope asked if work could begin earlier, but Mengesha insisted that his people be afforded a proper lunch break. Wauchope then asked if the Kagnev personnel could work through lunch time the following day. Mengesha, still maintaining his negative attitude, said he would consider it the next day, but they should be able to complete the task by noon.

Mr. Wauchope went back to the airport where the aircraft was still being loaded. The Air Force cargo handlers, one from Athens and four from Rhein Main, Germany indicated they could remain behind to assist in the evacuation efforts, if approval was granted from high authority. LT Fahner agreed with Wauchope that this would be extremely helpful and sent a FLASH message to the 21st Air Force requesting the five individuals be permitted to remain in Asmara. Wauchope and Fahner also agreed that it would take a considerable amount of time for the message to be answered. With Mengesha's approval, the five Air Force personnel were directed by Fahner and Wauchope to remain in Asmara regardless of the lack of confirmation from higher authority. Also, a noteworthy asset was the six-ton fork lift from the airport, left behind with the Air Force personnel.

Shortly after 1500, LT Fahner and a hand-picked detail, returned to Tract Bravo and immediately commenced removal of the Satellite components and they started disconnecting the remaining MYSTIC STAR equipment. When directed to secure by the EPMG, 80 percent of the MYSTIC STAR terminal had been disconnected.

The forklift developed mechanical problems on the journey from the airport to Tract Echo. The shops at Tract Echo were already closed which necessitated waiting until the local nationals arrived at work the following morning to obtain the tools and expertise to affect the repairs.

28 APRIL 1977

THE SIXTH DAY

Tuesday morning the forklift was repaired. Its return to operational status assured the one remaining flight would be sufficient for removing the remaining American personnel and equipment.

Shortly after 0800 LT Fahner and detail including Air Force Personnel arrived at Tract Bravo. They immediately finished the job of disconnecting the MYSTIC STAR equipment. Captain Cadoni had tentatively agreed to allow the Americans to work all day and not be burdened with securing during lunch.

Next, they started removing the essential equipment from the Communications Center with the assistance of several dedicated local employees, while the Air Force Personnel palletized and loaded the equipment on a 15-ton tractor trailer. The SATCOMM personnel were busy packing modules they had removed the previous day and once complete, started removing additional high value items.

During all this, **RMSN Conley** was busy with a very special and delicate mission. His assignment was to collect all the cryptographic materials (circuit boards) hidden in the back room of the building. The night before he had been instructed to obtain a clip board upon his arrival at Tract Bravo and proceed as if we were taking inventory throughout the building. If he was under observation by an EPMG guard, his orders were to keep moving in an effort to lose the guard. Once alone, he was to go silently to the rear of the building and very quietly collect the sensitive material. Periodically he was to stop, go out to the main part of the building, circulate around and, at an opportune time, return to his mission.

Seaman Conley did a fantastic job in performing the mission and at one time, unaware of what the material was, the EPMG guards were helping him load the KW-7 remains onto the truck. The EPMG guards were totally ignorant of his mission and never once noticed his frequent excursions into the back room.

At one point, Conley *“nearly came unglued”*. It seems a few of the of the circuit boards had been thrown into a drain it filled with water. When the water exceeded a predetermined level, an automatic pump was activated, and the water pumped out. Not remembering the pump, Conley stuck his hand into the pit to locate the boards and immediately activated the whining pump, seemingly ten time louder than ever before. Seaman Conley gradually regained his facial color.

It was later determined that all but three of the KW-7 circuit boards were recovered. The remaining boards are assumed to still be in the water pit, and in LT Fahner’s words, *“I feel sorry for the poor Ethiopian that sticks his hand down there.”*

LT Fahner saw things during the day that he *“just couldn’t believe”*. He watched men manually pick up equipment that weighed 300 pounds, move and load a 3200-pound piece of equipment in twenty minutes and other unbelievable feats he will never forget. Every man knew what he had to do and he did it. The local national employees pitched in and worked right alongside the Americans.

Due to the exceptional performance of all concerned, all the intended equipment plus many more items had been removed by noon. Even key spare parts were removed from the Supply building. Due to speed and efficiency of the crew, Captain Cadoni, *“suspected that the building might be packed up next”*, ordered a halt at 1200 and said, *“you guys have taken enough”*. He seemed to be dazed by the large amount of material in such a short period of time.

When they returned with the equipment to Tract Echo, the equipment was weighed, and the totals reported to Mr. Wauchope at the Consulate. This conformed the need for only one more flight previously requested. There seemed to be some confusion as to the number of flights necessary among higher military authorities. There were suggestions to move the flight forward by 2-1/2 hours, but plans concerning the convoy and other preparations had already been made.

The KW-7’s at the Consulate were completely destroyed in detail by removing all of the modules from the circuit boards with a heavy-duty screwdriver and then smashing the boards beyond recognition. They were then locked in a hidden safe that should remain hidden for some time. The KY-38 located at the consulate was

also destroyed, but due to its rugged field proof construction, took one man nearly all day to do it.

Mr. Wauchope was also busy trying to resolve another problem. On the morning of April 26, **CISCO employee Ernest Franz** married his Ethiopia sweetheart of five years, **Belaninesh**. Despite the efforts of several highly-placed friends, Franz was confronted with innumerable obstacles in obtaining a passport and exit permit for his new wife. The EPMG maintained that the wedding took place after the order was given for the Americans to leave Ethiopia. This problem persisted right until the end.

29 APRIL 1977

THE LAST DAY

Ethiopian officials were nowhere to be found on Friday morning. At 1000, Mr. Wauchope was informed that Mr. Abraham Mebrathu has secured for the day and Mengesha was in a meeting with the Chief Administrator and would be busy for approximately three hours. Wauchope left word with Mengesha's private secretary that the Americans would be gone in two hours and for her to say goodbye for him.

He then went to Tract Echo and joined the convoy destined for the airport. The flight arrived on time and was definitely a welcomed sight for the remaining Americans.

According to Mr. Wauchope, it was apparent that the Government had decided in advance, probably in the form of Mengesha, that it would be necessary to maintain control over the Americans through one mechanism or another until the very last moment. They used various methods throughout the closure, i.e., the two CISCO employees that were stranded in Massawa by continually claiming that a four day stretch of bad weather was the reason they couldn't be flown to Asmara; Mrs. Franz, the Ethiopian national recently married to Ernest Franz; and the insistence at the airport later, for a packing list of all materials taken out of Ethiopia. The list had not been mentioned previously, but was now a necessity and without it the aircraft could not be loaded.

Mengesha had asked Mr. Wauchope the previous evening during a conversation concerning Mr. Franz, when the aircraft was scheduled to arrive and how long after that until they would depart. Wauchope told him the aircraft was due to arrive at 1130 and the would probably be ready to depart an hour later. Mengesha said, *"that's no problem, we have plenty of time to solve Franz' problem"*.

At the airport, the packing list previously mentioned was demanded by the customs agent. Wauchope told him to have Mengesha come to the airport and tell him personally that loading could not commence, and while he was there he had some other issues to discuss with him. This seemed to frustrate the customs officials and he apparently called someone in authority. Half an hour later, they were told they could start loading the aircraft, which they already had half loaded. At this stage, the Americans essentially ignored the official's request and were determined to talk only with Mengesha. If he didn't have the foresight to be there, then they were leaving without his permission.

During loading operations at the airport, and while still awaiting permission for Mrs. Franz to leave, LT Fahner intentionally stopped the operations when half completed to keep the EPMG guards from getting the psychological boost of seeing a U.S. Air Force C-141 fully loaded and sitting on the apron awaiting the departure permission for Mrs. Franz.

Mr. Wauchope was informed by the aircraft Commander that he had all afternoon for loading and had a secure line, which when later activated, was found to be inoperable. They also discussed alternate air route out of Ethiopia if they had to take Mrs. Franz without permission. Wauchope was operating under verbal instructions from the Ambassador and written instructions from the State Department not to jeopardize the mission to get Mrs. Franz out of the country.

Mengesha stuck by his word and granted the permission and was in control of the Americans until the last possible moment. The Americans knew that they too, were successful in accomplishing the enormous task that now lay behind them. The final go-ahead on Mrs. Franz was given at 1220, after the aircraft had been completely loaded and they were waiting for the permission. Mr. Wauchope went back to Asmara to get the documents required for Mrs. Franz. These documents couldn't be obtained without Mengesha's final written approval which delayed the departure of the flight by some 45 minutes.

While the aircraft was transiting the field to assume take-off position, Mr. Wauchope was counting noses of EPMG fighters nearby. He was pleased that permission was granted for Mr. Franz to leave with them, but he will never know if

he would have given the order to alter the flight plans and take her out without permission.

As the last aircraft circles Asmara for the last time before it set its course for Athens, LT Fahner was reflecting over the previous week and recalling the 91st Psalm: ***“When they called upon Him, He answered them. When they were in trouble, He helped them. He had rescued them, and now He honors them”***. Those words meant a great deal to Fahner and they remained with him throughout the ***Last Seven Days of Kagnew Station***.



Tract B - As Seen Today from Google Earth

Footnotes:

Added to the author's text for historical context for the reader:

Telegram 4993 From the Embassy in Ethiopia to the Department of State, April 27, 1976, 1008Z¹

April 27, 1976, 1008Z

TELEGRAM

Department of State

ADDIS ABABA 4993

FM AMEMBASSY ADDIS ABABA

TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASH DC 9152 INFO RUTABA/AMCONSUL ASMARA 7298

RLEHEG/AMEMBASSY CAIRO 692

RUQMKM/AMEMBASSY KHARTOUM 2585

RUDTC/AMEMBASSY LONDON 937

RUQMDI/AMEMBASSY MOGADISCIO 4304

RUEHMO/AMEMBASSY MOSCOW 336

RUQMDII/AMEMBASSY NAIROBI 3043

RUFNPS/AMENBASSY PARIS 2979

RUMJPG/USLO PEKING 071

SUBJECT: THE SETTING FOR ETHIOPIA'S LEFTWARD LURCH

1.

EMBASSY WILL BE ATTEMPTING IN OTHER MESSAGES TO MAKE SENSE OF DEVELOPMENTS IN ETHIOPIA IN PAST FEW WEEKS, AND THEIR IMPLICATIONS FOR US POLICY. THIS MESSAGE TRIES TO OUTLINE, IN OVERSIMPLIFIED TERMS, SOME OF THE MAJOR BACKGROUND ELEMENTS AGAINST WHICH FUTURE REPORTING CAN BE VIEWED.

2.

THE REVOLUTION THAT BEGAN OVER TWO YEARS AGO HAS PRODUCED A NUMBER OF DESIRABLE CHANGES—LAND REFORM; BETTER USE OF TRAINED MANPOWER; REDISTRIBUTION OF INCOME IN FAVOR OF LOW INCOME GROUPS; ATTEMPTS TO EXTEND GOVT SERVICES MORE WIDELY, ESPECIALLY TO THE RURAL AREAS; THE BEGINNINGS OF LOCAL SELF-GOVERNMENT IN THE FORM OF PEASANT ASSOCIATIONS AND URBAN ORGANIZATIONS, ETC. HIGH COFFEE PRICES, A GOOD GRAIN HARVEST, AND COMPETENT MANAGEMENT OF NATIONALIZED BUSINESS ENTERPRISES HAVE MINIMIZED ECONOMIC STRESSES. ALTHOUGH RISING PRICES HAVE REDUCED THE ECONOMIC BENEFITS THAT POORER PEOPLE MIGHT OTHERWISE HAVE EXPERIENCED, THIS GOVT HAS NEVERTHELESS IMPROVED THEIR MATERIAL WELFARE, IN SOME CASES TO A SUBSTANTIAL DEGREE.

3.

THE ABSENCE OF STRONG, CHARISMATIC LEADERSHIP, HOWEVER, HAS HAD THE CUMULATIVE EFFECT OF WEAKENING THE WHOLE FABRIC OF SOCIETY, CAUSING INCREASING DISSENSIONS AND UNDERMINING UNITY AND MUTUAL CONFIDENCE. RULING JUNTA (DIRG), ORIGINALLY 120 MEMBERS ELECTED BY MILITARY UNITS, FINDS ITSELF UNABLE TO AGREE ON NEXT STEPS, EXCEPT FOR VAGUE EGALITARIAN "SOCIALIST" GOALS. DIRG TIES WITH, AND RESPONSIVENESS TO, PARENT UNITS ARE INCREASINGLY STRAINED, TO POINT WHERE MOST DIRG MEMBERS DO NOT DARE TO RETURN TO UNITS. A SERIOUS SELF-EXAMINATION WITHIN DIRG WAS SPARED LAST OCTOBER BY ENLISTED MEN (WHO FORM MAJORITY OF DIRG) ATTACKING DIRGLEADERS FOR FAILING TO ACHIEVE POPULAR SUPPORT. OTHERS CONTEND THAT THE PROBLEM WAS MORE TRIBAL-BASED WITH MAJ. MENGISTU AND HIS GALLA IDEOLOGUES JOCKEYING FOR POWER AGAINST LTCOL ATNAFU AND HIS AMHARA/TIGRE FACTION. THAT DISCUSSION DID NOT PRODUCE ANY CONSENSUS ON WHAT TO DO, BRINGING INSTEAD INCREASED DISARRAY IN DIRG AND A SENSE OF HELPLESSNESS THAT HAS ENABLED FIRST V/CHAIRMAN MENGISTU TO EMERGE AS PRIMUS INTER PARES AND TO ACHIEVE AT LEAST PASSIVE DIRG ACQUIESCENCE IN PRESENT INNOVATIONS. HIS NEW MOVES SEEM GROUPED UNDER TWO CATEGORIES:

A.

TO SHARE POWER WITH LEFTIST INTELLECTUALS, IN A BID FOR THE SUPPORT OF STUDENTS AND, TRADE UNIONISTS, AND ALSO THROUGH A SHARP MEDIA TILT TOWARD SOVS, EAST EUROPEANS, AND CHINESE TO TRY FOR THEIR SUPPORT, ESPECIALLY SOV RESTRAINT ON SOMALIS.

B.

TO FOSTER UNIFIED POPULAR SENTIMENTS AND TO PLACATE MILITARY DISCONTENTS OVER ERITREAN WAR BY FANNING HISTORICAL FEAR OF ARAB/MOSLEM PRESSURES, AND ATTEMPTING TO RAISE LARGELY AMHARA AND SOME CO-OPTED GALLAS IN A "PEOPLES ARMY" TO GO TO ERITREA TO DISPLACE AND/OR EXTERMINATE ERITREANS, THUS ACHIEVING "FINAL SOLUTION" OF PROBLEM.

4.

BOTH MOVES APPEAR MORE DEMAGOGIC THAN RATIONAL AND NEITHER SEEMS CAPABLE OF PRODUCING THE INTENDED RESULTS. HOWEVER, BOTH ARE STILL IN PROCESS OF UNFOLDING, AND DETAILED ASSESSMENTS MUST AWAIT MORE FACTS.

5.

WHAT CONCERNS US NOW IS THE VISIBLE SOCIAL AND INSTITUTIONAL DISARRAY IN ETHIOPIA WHERE THESE DISPARATE MOVES BY A SMALL CLIQUE COULD HAVE DISASTROUS RESULTS. AS HAS BEEN THE CASE IN REVOLUTIONS IN OTHER TRADITIONAL SOCIETIES, THIS ONE IS NOW (TEMPORARILY WE HOPE) IN THE HANDS OF A FEW HUNDRED LEFTIST IDEOLOGUES WHO SEEM BENT ON DESTROYING FIRST AND BUILDING LATER. THEY ARE TRYING BY "MASS ACTION", MOSTLY IN THE LARGE TOWNS, TO ACHIEVE ALMOST OVERNIGHT THE SOCIALIST "MODERNIZATION" OF A HIGHLY TRADITIONAL, RURAL-BASED SOCIETY THAT DOESN'T UNDERSTAND THEM, AND THAT THEY DON'T SEEM TO UNDERSTAND OR VALUE. A YEAR AND A HALF AGO THE DIRG PROBABLY INTENDED TO EMBARK ON A PERIOD OF SOCIALIST POLITICAL TUTELAGE THAT WOULD LEAD TO A CONSENSUS ON APPROPRIATE STEPS TOWARD SOCIALIST GOALS. HAVING FAILED THROUGH DISSENSION AND INEPTITUDE THE DIRG NOW ALLOWS THE MOST VOCAL URBAN ELEMENTS

TO SEEK QUICK AND RADICAL SOLUTIONS TO ETHIOPIA'S COMPLICATED PROBLEMS. THE GENUINE IDEALISTIC GOAL OF BETTERING THE LIFE OF THE POORER PEOPLE STILL REMAINS, BUT THE MEANS NOW BEING CHOSEN ARE NOT LIKELY TO ACHIEVE THAT GOAL.

6.

BOTH THE PROBLEMS AND THE ATTEMPTED SOLUTIONS ARE CAUSING SIGNIFICANT SCHISMS AND TENSIONS.

A.

THERE ARE SERIOUS DISAGREEMENTS WITHIN THE MILITARY ITSELF, WHERE THE REVOLUTION HAS BEEN FROM THE BOTTOM RATHER THAN THE TOP, DISCIPLINE IS INCREASINGLY POOR, A LARGE NUMBER OF OFFICERS HAVE BEEN RETIRED, AND UNEDUCATED ENLISTED GROUPS OFTEN MAKE THEIR OWN DECISIONS ON WHETHER TO OBEY ORDERS. POLITICS IS LESS A FACTOR THAN PRACTICAL GRIEVANCES (INCLUDING COMBAT IN ERITREA), BUT THE RESULT IS THAT ARMY UNITY CONTINUES TO ERODE.

B.

POTENTIALLY DANGEROUS TENSIONS BETWEEN AMHARAS AND GALLAS HAVE INTENSIFIED, WITHIN THE MILITARY, IN GOVT, AND IN THE COUNTRYSIDE. MHAQS ARE SAYING, WITH SOME JUSTIFICATION, THAT THERE IS A DISPROPORTIONATE NUMBER OF GALLAS IN HIGH PLACES INCLUDING AMONG THE LEADING LEFTIST IDEOLOGUES, THAT TOO MANY GALLAS ARE BEING SELECTED FOR CHOICE JOBS THROUGH FAVORITISM, THAT THIS IS THE GALLAS WHO HAVE BEEN CHIEF BENEFICIARIES OF LAND REFORM THROUGH OUSTING OF AMHARA LANDLORDS IN THE SOUTH, AND THAT GALLAS ARE NOW TRYING TO EXPLOIT AMHARA/TIGRE CONFLICT IN ERITREA TO CONSOLIDATE THEIR ASCENDANCY. THE ARGUMENT IS MADE THAT PREVIOUS GRADUAL APPROACH TO REVOLUTION BENEFITTED THE AMHARA-CENTERED COALITION, WHILE PRESENT RADICAL LINES (LED BY GALLAS INCLUDING MENGISTU AND THE IDEOLOGUES) WOULD PROMOTE GALLA ASCENDANCY. THESE TRIBAL ANTAGONISMS ARE REFLECTED IN UNDERGROUND LEFTIST GROUPS — "VOICE OF THE MASSES" BEING WIDELY PERCEIVED AS GALLA, AND EPRP/DEMOCRACIA AS AMHARA-TIGRE. IN REALITY, NEITHER GALLAS NOR AMHARAS ARE AT ALL UNIFIED

BEHIND ANY IDEOLOGY, BUT THE ABOVE TRIBALIST PERCEPTIONS COULD BE MORE IMPORTANT THAN OBJECTIVE FACTS.

C.

THE BUREAUCRACY, THE CHIEF RESERVOIR OF MANAGEMENT TALENT AND EDUCATION — INITIALLY WELL-DISPOSED TOWARD THE REVOLUTION — INCREASINGLY FINDS ITSELF THE TARGET OF LEFTIST VITUPERATION, ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL DISCRIMINATION, AND FEELS THREATENED BY THE GOVT. MOST MEMBERS OF THIS ESSENTIAL CLASS HAVE ALREADY LOST HEAVILY THROUGH NATIONALIZATIONS OF LAND AND HOUSING.

D.

THE "PROGRESSIVE" ELEMENTS — TEACHERS, STUDENTS, TRADE UNIONISTS — HAVE UTTERLY FAILED TO COALESCE AROUND ANY CONSTRUCTIVE PROGRAM, BEING UNITED ONLY IN THEIR DESIRE TO SEE THE CURRENT DIRG LEADERSHIP OUSTED, A WISH THEY EXPRESS BY DEMANDS FOR FREE SPEECH AND A CIVILIAN GOVT. PAROCHIAL DEMANDS CUT ACROSS IDEOLOGIES: THE TRADE UNIONISTS, ALREADY MUCH BETTER OFF THAN MOST OF THE POPULATION, WANT MORE MONEY AND SHORTER HOURS; MANY STUDENTS WANT AUTOMATIC PASSES WITHOUT EXAMINATIONS. MANY OLDER STUDENTS IN THE ZEMACHA PROGRAM, ABETTED BY INTELLECTUALS, WANT SIMPLISTIC AND EXTREME MEASURES INCLUDING GENUINE CLASS WARFARE AND THE LIQUIDATION OF REACTIONARIES. THE "FREE SPEECH" COLUMNS OF NEWSPAPERS IN RECENT WEEKS, AND THE ABORTIVE DAY OF FREE DEMONSTRATIONS APRIL 22, PRODUCED MORE DISUNITY THAN EVER, WITH RADICAL FACTIONS ATTACKING OTHER RADICALS, INCLUDING ESPECIALLY V/CHAIRMAN MENGISTU.

7.

WE VENTURE NO PREDICTIONS AT THIS TIME. MODERATES EVERYWHERE — IN THE MILITARY, IN GOVT, IN THE COUNTRYSIDE—SEEM PARALYZED. WE FEEL INSTINCTIVELY THAT THE MORE TRADITIONAL AND RATIONAL FORCES IN THIS SOCIETY. WHICH AFTER ALL HAVE VERY DEEP ROOTS, WILL EVENTUALLY EXERT A BRAKING EFFECT ON THE SMALL URBAN GROUP OF SELF-APPOINTED RADICAL LEADERS. WHEN AND IF THIS COMES ABOUT THE MEANS OF ITS COMING COULD BE MORE IMPORTANT THAN THE FACT; A CONSERVATIVE COUP BY A SEGIENT OF THE MILITARY COULD

TRIGGER AN INTRA-ARMY CIVIL WAR THAT THE DISARRAY WITHIN THE MILITARY WOULD EXACERBATE. OR THE EXCESSES OF TTA RADICALS COULD SERVE TO UNIFY THE MILITARY AND THE BUREAUCRACY BEHIND MORE MODERATE POLICIES. HOWEVER, A LOSS OF MUTUAL CONFIDENCE, NEVER VERY HIGH IN THIS SOCIETY, AND THE LACK OF THE STRONG LEADERSHIP TO WHICH THE COUNTRY IS ACCUSTOMED, DO NOT GIVE CAUSE FOR OPTIMISM. WE REMIND OURSELVES THAT EPMG RHETORIC HAS ALWAYS BEEN MORE ALARMING THAN ITS ACTIONS. BUT IN THE INCREASE IN STRESSES ON THE SOCIETY WE SEE SUBSTANTIAL DANGERS.

HUMMEL

(Ambassador)