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**SIGNIFICANT POLITICAL-MILITARY DEVELOPMENTS  
IN SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA**

December 1984

Prepared by the Federal Research Division of  
the Library of Congress under an interagency agreement

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## PREFACE

This chronology is organized by region, country, and date of event. The date of event is sometimes difficult to determine because it varies from source to source. Some sources cite the actual date of the incident whereas others appear to use the official news release dateline. When possible, the actual date of the occurrence is listed.

Analysts contributing to this chronology are Eunice Charles, Nancy Drexler, Mary Louise Harmon, Kenneth Liberstein, Moses Pinkston, and Rachel Warner.

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East/Central Africa

Burundi/Zaire

13/12/84 Official Burundi radio launches a verbal attack on Zaire's regime in response to a similar broadcast in Kinshasa about Burundi. Tension between the two countries intensified with the failure of Colonel Bagaza to attend President Mobutu's swearing-in ceremony. Initially tension was probably caused by Burundi's reporting of an attack in November on the Zairian town of Moba which hinted at a threatened regime in Zaire.

Zaire

03/12/84 Field Marshal Mobutu Sese Seko is sworn in for his third 7-year term of office as president. Mobutu has been successful in ruling over the numerous peoples who inhabit Zaire and has survived several threats to his regime.

East/Central  
Africa/Southern  
Africa

Zaire/Zambia

04/12/84 A Zambian official reports that some 400 Zaireans have fled into Zambia in the aftermath of fighting in Zaire between government forces and rebels involved in the cross border attack on Moba on 12 November. The refugees allege that they were mistreated by Zairean troops demanding food and money. Such allegations are typical of complaints by the Zairean population about the behavior of army troops who are irregularly paid.

Horn of Africa

Ethiopia

24/11/84 The Eritrean People's Liberation Front (EPLF) reports that it thwarted attempts by government forces to recapture bases near Halhal in Eritrea between 24-28 November. The EPLF also reports it successfully countered a government forces attack on an EPLF garrison in southeast Eritrea on 25 November.

00/12/84

Reports surface that Israel is selling Soviet-made ammunition and military spare parts to Ethiopia and has been doing so for more than a year. Much of the military equipment apparently comes from stocks the Israelis captured in Lebanon in 1982. The equipment includes spares for small arms, tanks, trucks, and aircraft.

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13/12/84 Ethiopian leader Mengistu Haile Mariam pays an official visit to Cuba from 13 to 15 December and meets with Fidel Castro. He then travels to Moscow and meets with Soviet leader Konstantin Chernenko on 17 December. The purpose of the visit to Moscow presumably is to win increased Soviet assistance.

17/12/84 On 8 December the EPLF reports killing 1,170 government soldiers when government forces try to recapture two posts in southwestern Eritrea. EPLF fighters attack the town of Decamere on 17 December and report killing 70 government troops and capturing large quantities of weapons. Although casualty figures may be exaggerated, they indicate that major conflicts are occurring in this part of Eritrea.

Ethiopia/Sudan

00/12/84 The Ethiopian Government proclaims its most important priority to be resettlement of famine victims from Tigray and Welo Provinces to the southwest. By the end of December approximately 120,000 people had been removed to the southwestern lowlands. The government's goal is to resettle 1.5 million people by the end of 1985 and 3 million by 1990. Little foreign food aid is reaching the guerrilla-held areas of the north. As the famine worsens in these areas the number of Ethiopians fleeing to Sudan is increasing markedly, exacerbating the refugee problem there.

Kenya

12/12/84 President Moi pardons former Constitutional Affairs Minister Charles Njonjo, who had been under investigation for allegedly conspiring to overthrow Moi with foreign assistance in 1982. The formerly powerful politician will not be reinstated in the national party, precluding him from becoming active in Kenyan politics for the present. This puts an end to the "Njonjo affair" which had dominated much of Kenyan politics since June 1983. Two politicians and two university lecturers who had been detained without trial since 1982 are also released on 12 December.

Somalia

28/11/84 The Somali National Movement (SNM) reports launching three surprise attacks on government forces based in or near Burao, capital of Togdheer region, between 28 November and 9 December. The SNM also ambushes government vehicles on roads in the region several times during December. In late December, the SNM reports that the Somali government killed

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41 people in Burao to avenge SNM attacks on government troops earlier in the month. It also claims 16 Somali officers were executed for failing to halt SNM attacks in the northwest region during November. These claims are difficult to verify.

03/12/84 The Democratic Front for the Salvation of Somalia (DFSS) reports attacking government troops in Mudug region on 3 December and destroying a government military base south of Dusa Mareb in Galguduud region on 25 December.

Sudan

18/12/84 The government releases former prime minister and former Umma Party leader Sadiq el-Mahdi who had been detained without trial since September 1983. The move comes as a surprise since President Nimeiri had recently stated that if party leaders were released from prison, they would work against the regime. There are an estimated 350 political prisoners in Sudan.

Indian Ocean Islands

Madagascar

06/12/84 Bloody clashes break out between rival youth gangs, leaving 50 people dead in Antananarivo. The rioting is the result of hostility between the gangs, one of which is housed in a camp for school dropouts which was originally set up by the government to try to reintegrate these youth into society.

Sahel

Chad

16/12/84 President Francois Mitterrand of France announces that his country will not go to war for northern Chad but rather will use "constant pressure" on Libyan ruler Muammar Qadhafi to get him to withdraw his remaining troops from Chad. Mitterrand adds that France will act if Libya attempts to enter southern Chad. Given this French position, it appears unlikely that Libyan troops will leave Chad in the near future.

Mauritania

12/12/84 A new regime under LTC Mohamed Marouya Ould Sid'Ahmed Taya, 41 years old, assumes power in a coup d'etat. The former head of state, LTC Mohamed Khouna Ould Haidalla, was returning to Mauritania from the Franco-African summit in Burundi when the coup occurred. The coup d'etat could have

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been provoked by differences between the military leaders over the conflict in the Western Sahara; if so, the regime's new strongman could lead the country toward a more neutral position in the conflict. The new government reaffirms Mauritanian recognition of the SDAR and adherence to the trilateral treaty of friendship and accord with Algeria and Tunisia. This reinforces the view that no foreign policy changes appear in the offing, although it is too early to draw any conclusions about the direction of the new regime. Algeria, Morocco and Senegal adopt a wait-and-see attitude while Libya immediately recognizes the regime. The ramifications of this rapid recognition are unclear. The new authorities say nothing about the fate of the former president who was arrested on his return to Nouakchott and taken to a military camp.

Southern Africa

Angola

21/12/84

The Angolan defense and security forces annihilate 38 UNITA guerrillas in operations carried out between 5 and 10 December. The guerrillas were active in several areas of Huambo, Bie, and Cunene Provinces. During the operations 3 UNITA members, as well as an assortment of war materiel, are captured, and 76 civilians are released. Most of the operations occur in Huambo Province, where 34 UNITA members are killed in 3 days of combat.

Mozambique

03/12/84

The Mozambican Army reports that it has discovered the body of the second of two Italian technicians abducted by RENAMO in Maputo Province on 12 September. The two Italian technicians had been working on the construction of the Corumano Dam. The abduction and murder of the technicians has caused concern to foreign countries which are providing Mozambique with developmental aid.

04/12/84

The electric power supply from the South African station of Komatipoort to Maputo, disrupted 5 days before by RENAMO sabotage, is still not repaired and large areas of the Mozambican capital remain without electricity. Maputo's water supply is also cut because it depends on electric pumping stations. This latest sabotage is evidence of RENAMO's continuing ability to inflict major damage and its continuing viability despite the signing of the Nkomati Accord in March 1984.

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04/12/84 It is reported that RENAMO rebels have renewed ambushes on heavy transport convoys on the Mozambican stretch of the road between Malawi and Zimbabwe. The sophistication of the attacks after a lull of 4 months is an indication that RENAMO has been resupplied, but the Mozambican Government is uncertain about the identity of the suppliers.

06/12/84 RENAMO rebels kill seven East German agricultural experts and wound two in Niassa Province. Eleven people, including a Swede and a Portuguese, are killed in a rebel attack against four civilian vehicles near the Swaziland border. The attacks are part of a renewed effort by RENAMO to discourage foreign developmental experts from aiding the Mozambique Government.

South Africa

07/12/84 The Catholic Church in Southern Africa issues a 38-page report which denounces police conduct in countering the unrest which has swept black townships around Johannesburg since August. The report, which declares that police behavior "resembled that of an occupying foreign army controlling enemy territory," is released at a press conference in Pretoria by the Reverend Denis Hurley, Archbishop of Durban and President of the Southern African Catholic Bishops' Conference. It alleges indiscriminate use of firearms, including rubber bullets, birdshot and conventional bullets, and estimates that 150 people were killed in the unrest, nearly all by the police.

13/12/84 United Democratic Front President Archie Gumede and Natal Indian Congress official Paul David walk out of the British consulate in Durban after spending 3 months there and are immediately arrested by security police. Charged with high treason under the Internal Security Act, they are to be held in custody until 21 December when six other people facing similar charges will appear in court. The six include three others who were originally part of the Durban consulate sit-in: Mewa Ramogobin, M.J. Naidoo, and George Sewpersadh, as well as Curtis Nkondo, Aubrey Mokoena, and Essop Jassat. The third dissident who left the consulate on 13 December, Billy Nair, is allowed to go free.

24/12/84 Police headquarters in Pretoria announce that counterinsurgency units engaged in several skirmishes with ANC guerrillas during the past 3 weeks. A temporary ANC base was attacked and a cache of guns, mines, and ammunition was

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captured in the Ingwavuna region of Natal Province. The appearance of ANC guerrillas in that region suggests that infiltration across the border has occurred since Mozambique and Swaziland signed nonaggression treaties with Pretoria early this year.

25/12/84 On Christmas day, about 1,000 young blacks clash with police as they return from visiting the graves of people killed during the unrest in Sharpeville township, south of Johannesburg. The crowd sets fire to a warehouse as police guards fire at them. When the police run out of ammunition, members of the crowd chase them and set fire to the house of one guard. At least six youths are wounded by police bullets.

27/12/84 Imprisoned ANC leader Nelson Mandela rejects an indirect government offer to release him under restrictive conditions. The offer, the second this year that Mandela has refused, follows speculation that after 4 months of racial unrest South Africa is preparing to hold discussions with the ANC. Mandela, 66, who has served 21 years of a life sentence for plotting the overthrow of white minority rule, was offered asylum by Kaizer Matanzima of Transkei. Mandela rejected the offer in a "sharply worded" letter that the government suppressed under its censorship laws. In March, Mandela refused an earlier offer of conditional release from Mantanzima. A statement by Mandela said he would never accept a conditional offer of release nor have any dealings with blacks such as Matanzima whom he regards as collaborators.

Swaziland

11/12/84 A big cache of arms is discovered at Ngwane Park in Manzini. Included in the cache are a rocket and a rocket launcher capable of downing aircraft, six AK47 rifles, limpet mines, hand grenades, several rounds of ammunition, pistols and other arms which were wrapped in plastic papers. Swaziland's chief of security comments that the cache is suspected of belonging to the ANC.

28/12/84 Police begin rounding up the last 23 ANC guerrillas in Swaziland. The crackdown follows a warning by the Swazi police a week ago that the men, who fled to Swaziland from neighboring Mozambique this year, had to surrender or be deported to South Africa. The announcement came a day after South Africa and Swaziland announced an agreement to

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exchange trade representatives, the first exchange of permanent envoys by the two nations.

West Africa

Guinea

18/12/84

President Lansana Conte announces the abolition of the position of prime minister and a reduction in the membership of the ruling Comite Militaire de Redressement National from 25 to 20. Former Prime Minister Colonel Diara Traore is demoted to minister of state for national education as Conte combines the posts of head of state and head of government in his position of President. Conte claims the purpose of the reshuffle is to increase efficiency, but it also signals that he is firmly in charge of Guinea's military government.

Ivory Coast

23/11/84

To mark the 22nd anniversary of the Franco-Ivorian defense accord, 2,000 French and 3,000 Ivorian soldiers participate in a joint 1-week military exercise code-named Comoe 84. The scale of this exercise illustrates the close military ties which still exist between Ivory Coast and its former colonial power. There are over 100 French officers serving as advisers to the Ivorian Armed Forces.

Nigeria

08/12/84

A 5-man delegation led by Chief of Air Staff Vice-Marshal Ibrahim Alfa leaves on a 10-day working visit to Italy, West Germany, the Netherlands, and France. The delegation will visit military installations and will hold discussions with representatives from the four host governments. This visit is indicative of Nigeria's continuing military relations with the West.