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REPORT DOCUMENTATION PAGE			Form Approved OMB No. 0704-0188	
Public reporting burden for this collection of information is estimated to average 1 hour per response, including the time for reviewing instructions, searching existing data sources, gathering and maintaining the data needed, and completing and reviewing the collection of information. Send comments regarding this burden estimate or any other aspect of this collection of information, including suggestions for reducing this burden, to Washington Headquarters Services, Directorate for Information Operations and Reports, 1215 Jefferson Davis Highway, Suite 1204, Arlington, VA 22202-4302, and to the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reduction Project (0704-0188), Washington, DC 20503.				
1. AGENCY USE ONLY (Leave Blank)	2. REPORT DATE Oct. 1984 - <del>Sept 1986</del>	3. REPORT TYPE AND DATES COVERED Final		
4. TITLE AND SUBTITLE Significant Political-Military Developments in Sub-Saharan Africa			5. FUNDING NUMBERS	
6. AUTHOR(S) LaVerle Berry, Eunice Charles, Nancy Drexler, Robert Handloff, Mary Louise Harmon, T. Robert Lenaghan, Kenneth Liberstein, Moses Pinkston, Rachel Warner				
7. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES) Federal Research Division Library of Congress Washington, DC 20540-4840			8. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION REPORT NUMBER	
9. SPONSORING/MONITORING AGENCY NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES) N/A			10. SPONSORING/MONITORING AGENCY REPORT NUMBER	
11. SUPPLEMENTARY NOTES Prepared under an Interagency Agreement				
12a. DISTRIBUTION/AVAILABILITY STATEMENT Approved for public release; distribution unlimited.			12b. DISTRIBUTION CODE	
13. ABSTRACT (Maximum 200 words) A monthly open-source summary of important strategic, political, and military events in sub-Saharan Africa organized by region, country, and date of event.				
14. SUBJECT TERMS Africa, Sub-Sahara Government Politics National security			15. NUMBER OF PAGES Various lengths	
17. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF REPORT UNCLASSIFIED			16. PRICE CODE	
18. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF THIS PAGE UNCLASSIFIED		19. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF ABSTRACT UNCLASSIFIED		20. LIMITATION OF ABSTRACT SAR

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

October 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. This date 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.

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

**October 1984**

HORN OF AFRICA

Ethiopia

- October Estimates of the scale of the famine in Ethiopia grow dramatically during the month. Western relief agencies double to 10 million their estimates of the number of people close to starvation. The famine now appears to be as serious as the one of a decade ago which precipitated the downfall of Emperor Haile Selassie. It may affect the guerrilla war in Tigray and Eritrea.
- 19 October The town of Lalibela in Welo Province is captured by insurgents of the Ethiopian People's Democratic Movement (EPDM) and the Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF). The insurgents capture 10 foreign tourists when they take the town, which is one of Ethiopia's major tourist attractions. Lalibela's seizure is a particular embarrassment to the regime at a time when it is trying to promote tourism.
- 30 October The Soviet Union announces it will provide 300 trucks, 12 transport planes and 24 helicopters to help Ethiopia's famine relief effort. Prior to this, Soviet aid had been negligible and contrasted sharply with Western assistance. The Soviets' response is likely the result of the heavy criticism they have come under for being willing to send massive military aid to Ethiopia and but no food or disaster assistance.

Sudan

- 29 September The state of emergency imposed in April 1984 by Sudanese President Jafa'r Numeiri is lifted and the special Islamic courts created to adjudicate cases under the Shari'a, traditional Islamic law, are suspended. These proclamations are delivered during President Numeiri's speech to the Sudanese Socialist Union, marking the first anniversary of the decision to introduce Islamic law as the basic constitutional law in the Sudan. These conciliatory measures are designed to appease American and European criticism of the recent state of Sudanese internal affairs. They represent an attempt to temper the radical wave of Islamization prevalent in the Sudan and portend a more pragmatic attitude towards the non-Muslim population of the south currently rebelling against the actions of the Khartoum government.
- 4 October Sudanese guerrillas, members of the Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA), ambush a government troop convoy between Duk and Ayod in the Jonglei province. An armored troop carrier is

destroyed and 64 government soldiers are killed. The convoy ambush ends the 5-week lull in SPLA activity. It was designed to disrupt the construction of an oil pipeline from the Unity field, developed by Chevron, to Port Sudan on the Red Sea coast and to serve as a demonstrable reminder of discontent with President Numeiri's arbitrary, militaristic style of leadership.

#### SAHEL

##### Chad

- 17 September France and Libya sign an accord to remove all their troops from Chad by 15 November. Chad protests that the French decision will leave it vulnerable to a new Libyan backed attack. There are approximately 5,000 Libyan troops and 3,200 French ones in Chad. The accord signifies the desire of both sides to end the year-long stalemate by mutual withdrawal.
- 5 October President Hissene Habre meets in Paris with President Francois Mitterrand and African leaders Bongo of Gabon, Houphouet-Boigny of Ivory Coast, and Mobutu of Zaire to discuss the troop withdrawal. Habre's government, fearing the Libyans will violate the accord, seeks assurances from France. By organizing a "mini-summit" with African leaders supportive of their policy, the French indicate they intend to adhere to the pact.
- 8 October The first contingent of French troops leaves Chad. Withdrawals continue throughout the month on a schedule apparently designed to meet the 15 November deadline. Although the mutual withdrawals are not as carefully monitored as originally planned, France announces that Libya is also removing its troops, a sign that the French are determined to leave Chad unless they are forced to remain by Libyan activities.
- 12 October Zaire announces officially that it will withdraw all of its troops now present in Chad. Up to 2,000 Zairean troops have been stationed in Chad since June 1983 in support of the Habre regime. Their withdrawal will follow that of French and Libyan troops from the country in which a civil war has continued for 2 decades. Some 500 to 1000 Zaireans are to remain in Chad to train Chadian soldiers, an indication of Zaire's continued support of the Habre government.
- 20-27 October Chad's various political factions meet in Brazzaville on 20 October for preparatory talks in an attempt at ending the civil war. The talks fail and are adjourned on 27 October with no date set for them to resume, an indication that neither the Habre government nor the Libyan-backed opposition GUNT is ready to compromise. The breakdown may also signify that the GUNT hopes to launch an offensive with Libyan aid when the French troop withdrawal is complete.

## Senegal

- 3 October Four persons are killed and several injured in two regional capitals in clashes between rival factions of the ruling Parti Socialiste. The clashes, which occur as the party is nominating its candidates for municipal and regional elections to be held in November, are an indication of internal problems in the party and may portend a weakening of President Abdou Diouf's position.
- 8 October A demonstration organized by seven opposition parties to protest recent price increases is banned by the government at the last minute. No incidents are reported as the crowd which had gathered is dispersed. The event illustrates the growing unrest in Senegal due to poor economic conditions which the opposition blames on the ruling party's policies.
- 9 October The Minister of Foreign Affairs, Moustapha Niasse, is removed from his post by President Diouf. Niasse is a long time Parti Socialiste leader and a powerful figure in Senegalese politics. His removal reflects the tensions and splits within the ruling party and may result in a loss of support for Diouf. It could also mean that Diouf is building an independent power base of younger men loyal to him.

## EAST/CENTRAL AFRICA

### Zaire

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## WEST AFRICA

### Gabon

- 3-6 October President Omar Bongo makes a state visit to France, an unusual event since African heads of state generally make working visits which call for less protocol. The high level of this visit illustrates the French desire to remain on good terms with Bongo both for economic reasons (Gabon's oil wealth) and political ones (support for France's Chad policy).

### Liberia

- 12 October Head of State Samuel K. Doe releases several persons detained since August on charges of plotting to overthrow the government. Among those released are Dr. Amos Sawyer, dean of the humanities faculty at the University of Liberia, and Major General Nicholas

Podier, speaker of the interim national assembly at the time of his arrest. US pressure is believed to have influenced Doe's decision, an indication of US interest in Liberia's progress toward civilian rule.

#### SOUTHERN AFRICA

##### Angola

- 6 October Official sources in Benguela claim that a total of 200 "bandits" are killed and a large quantity of war materiel seized during roundup operations in Lobito, Bocoio and Balombo. The materiel captured includes shells, antitank and antivehicle mines, grenades, ammunition, and military uniforms "of South African origin."
- 8 October More than 1,500 armed rebels, former supporters of the National Front for the Liberation of Angola (FNLA/COMIRA), plus 20,000 of their civilian supporters, have given themselves up to government forces, according to government reports. The former rebels surrendered with all their arms. Among those who gave themselves up were FNLA commanders who described their ranks as very senior, including Tonto Afonso Castro, "Chief of Staff."
- 11 October SWAPO is using Soviet-made tanks to defend its bases in Angola, according to a report issued by the International Institute for Strategic Studies, detailing for the first time the strength of guerrilla movements in Southern Africa. The report lists SWAPO's manpower at 8,000 and says its equipment includes Russian T34 and T54 tanks, armored personnel carriers, surface-to-air missiles, and antitank guided weapons.

##### Lesotho

- 2 October Following negotiations in September between South Africa and Lesotho, South Africa has begun delivering military equipment to Lesotho after it was held up at ports of entry in the Republic for the past few months. The equipment includes supplies from Britain as well as an Italian helicopter which will be used in Lesotho's drought relief program. The equipment holdup was caused by South African insistence that Lesotho sign a security pact to curb alleged African National Congress activity in its territory and by Pretoria's use of economic sanctions--including withdrawal from a water project.

##### Mozambique

- 3 October A ceasefire between the Mozambican Government and the Mozambique National Resistance Movement (RENAMO) is announced in Pretoria following mediation between the two sides by South African Foreign Affairs and Information Minister Roelof "Pik" Botha. RENAMO has been waging a guerrilla movement to destabilize the Machel regime since 1978, receiving support first from Rhodesia

and then from South Africa. South Africa's role in subduing the organization's activities follows the signing of the Nkomati Accord with Mozambique in March 1984, but many observers question whether South Africa has actually ceased support of RENAMO.

- 3 October Two Swazi soldiers are wounded when they are caught in a cross-fire during a border skirmish between Mozambican Security Forces and RENAMO rebel forces. The fighting spilled over into Swaziland when one of the parties crossed the border in hot pursuit of the other.
- 9, 12 October The bodies of 2 Italian technicians who had been kidnaped in September are found 50 kilometers north of the capital. The government also confirms the killings of two Portuguese advisers in September. RENAMO, which has been responsible for similar terrorist acts in the past, denies involvement in the killing of the Italian technicians. If RENAMO is responsible for any of the murders, it would be part of the organization's campaign to terrorize foreigners and thus discourage them from coming to Mozambique to help with development projects.

#### Namibia

- 1 October South African-led troops have shot and killed 17 black nationalist guerrillas in the last 2 weeks, the senior military officer in Namibia reports. Major General George Meiring says six of the guerrillas were killed in Kavango in the north of the territory.
- 4 October A bomb explosion badly damages the main water supply pipeline to northern Namibia. Reports say the bomb damaged the pipeline to Oshigambo in Ovambo, cutting off water to about 350 farms in the central Ovambo region. SWAPO has asserted it will step up the armed struggle in Namibia, and this attack may portend further activity in the territory.
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- 17 October South African-led security forces in Namibia capture a high ranking guerrilla leader of SWAPO and eliminate a key "mobile headquarters" in the war-torn Kavango area, the head of the South West Africa Territorial Force reports. The destroyed headquarters is described as the "nerve center" from which all SWAPO's armed activity in the northern region of Kavango had been planned.

## South Africa

- 2 October In renewed violence 4 people are killed, several people injured, and more than 50 arrested in various parts of the country. Three teenagers are killed at KwaThema on the east Rand when a van, which had been stoned, ploughs into a group of about 300 people. In Soweto, a man is battered to death during an attack on a private home in Jabulani by about 100 people, in continuing protest of a rent hike in government-owned houses.
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- 16 October Bishop Desmond Tutu, a leading voice in South Africa for nonviolent efforts to end that country's policy of apartheid, is named as the 1984 recipient of the Nobel Peace Prize. The selection committee said the 53-year-old General Secretary of the South African Council of Churches was being recognized because the means by which the campaign to end apartheid "is conducted is of vital importance for the whole of the continent of Africa and for the cause of peace in the world." The choice of Bishop Tutu is expected to be seen by the South African Government as an unwelcome political gesture intended to increase international pressures for change.
- 23 October A combined force of 7,000 police and soldiers is sent into three black townships south of Johannesburg in the biggest crackdown on political dissent ever mounted in South Africa. The heavily armed men, backed by armored vehicles, throw cordons around the townships, which have been the scene of racial unrest for nearly 2 months, then move from house to house, searching an estimated 225,000 inhabitants and arresting 363. The operation--Code named Palmiet (Bullrush)--marks the first time South African authorities have used mass searches to round up black dissidents. It is also the first time the army has been employed so openly to quell racial unrest.

Swaziland

3 October

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