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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 ADDIS ABABA 000166

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TAGS: PREL, PGOV, MARR, MOPS, PTER, SOCI, KE, SO
SUBJECT: ASSISTANT SECRETARY CARSON'S JANUARY 30, 2010,
MEETING WITH KENYAN FOREIGN MINISTER WETANGULA

Classified By: Assistant Secretary for African Affairs Johnnie Carson f
or reasons 1.4 (b,d).

1. (C) Summary: A high-level Kenyan delegation headed by Foreign Minister Wetangula used a long January 30 meeting on the margins of the AU Summit to lobby Assistant Secretary for African Affairs Johnnie Carson's support for the GOK's long-incubating Lower Juba initiative. Wetangula, the Minister of Defense, the Director of the National Security and Intelligence Services, and the military's chief-of-staff each in turn highlighted the dangers to Kenya emanating from Somalia and advertised an incursion into Somalia by the roughly two thousand Somali forces currently being trained by the GOK as the best solution. The Kenyan delegation assured A/S Carson that both Somalia's Transitional Federal Government (TFG) and the Government of Ethiopia supported Kenya's efforts and insisted that A/S Carson's longstanding concerns about the Kenyan plan had all been addressed.

2. (C) Summary and comment continued: A/S Carson tactfully, but categorically refused the Kenyan delegation's attempts to enlist USG support for their effort. He worried that the

Lower Juba initiative could be very expensive, that it could catalyze clan and sub-clan rivalries, that success could create a rival to the TFG, that the GOK could be unwittingly providing training to future or current ONLF members, and that the GOK was not prepared to handle the domestic repercussions should their effort fail. The January 30 meeting marked Wetangula's third attempt to enlist A/S Carson's support and was only the latest in a long-running campaign by the Kenyan government to win USG agreement to its initiative. The persistence with which the GOK is courting the USG suggests, if nothing else, that they have finally awakened to the implications for Kenya of long-term instability in Somalia and are attempting belatedly to address the problem. End comment and summary.

Wetangula Previews GOK's Domestic
Achievements Before Discussing the
Lower Juba Initiative

3. (C) GOK Foreign Minister Wetangula kicked off a long January 30 meeting with Assistant Secretary for African Affairs Johnnie Carson by highlighting Kenya's comparative stability and reporting progress that the GOK has made on its domestic reform agenda. Wetangula noted that a draft constitution had been submitted to the committee of experts and guessed that Parliament would be called back from recess in order to examine the draft.

4. (C) The constitution would introduce a "U.S.-type" presidential system and would reserve 47 seats in Parliament for women and 12 seats for members of "vulnerable groups." Under the draft, cabinet members would not be permitted to serve as members of Parliament, an upper house of 47 seats would be created, a five-year election cycle would be instituted, and there would be judicial reform. Wetangula recalled that A/S Carson had criticized the GOK's tendency to confuse "process with progress," but insisted that the reform now underway in Kenya was genuine.

Domestic Progress Threatened by
Continuing Problems in Somalia

5. (C) Wetangula contrasted the progress being made on the domestic agenda with the threat posed to Kenya by continuing instability in Somalia. He alleged that six - ten thousand refugees enter Kenya from Somalia each month, pointed to the over-extended Dadaab refugee camps in northeast Kenya, that the GOK had intercepted ten attempts to smuggle in bomb-making materials in the past year, recalled the domestic unrest triggered by the recent visit of a controversial Jamaican muslim cleric to Kenya, and forecast repercussions from Kenya's good-faith efforts to meet its obligations under the memorandum of understanding on piracy as extremely worrisome.

TFG, Government of Ethiopia
Support Kenyan Initiative

6. (C) Wetangula alleged that the Somalia Transitional Federal Government (TFG) had proposed the Jubaland initiative to Kenya and that the Government of Ethiopia, after some

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initial questions, had endorsed it as well. The Kenyan effort was being coordinated by a team based in Prime Minister Odinga's office, Wetangula said, but the Prime Minister and President Kibaki co-chair the effort in order to make it truly bi-partisan. That team had recently met with Prime Minister Meles for over two hours, Wetangula said, and had successfully addressed all of the GOE Prime Minister's concerns.

7. (C) While he acknowledged that the TFG had limited capacity, Wetangula argued that strategic concerns meant that Kenya had to support it. He briefly reviewed evidence of Kenyan terrorist trails that led to Somalia, including the Somali Dane who had been expelled from Kenya at the time of the Secretary's visit in August, then attacked the Danish cartoonist in December 2009.

A/S Carson's Questions About
Kenyan Plan

8. (C) A/S Carson reviewed the history of excellent U.S. - Kenya cooperation and praised the GOK's efforts to discharge its international obligations. The USG shared the GOK's concerns about Somalia and strongly supported the TFG and the Djibouti peace process. The U.S. was the largest contributor to AMISOM and was attempting to induce TCCs to contribute troops to the AU's effort.

9. (C) Noting that he had carefully weighed the pros and cons of the Kenyan proposal, A/S Carson worried that the initiative could backfire, warning that we did not want to create situations we cannot control, then highlighted his concerns:

- the undertaking could be more complicated and much more expensive than the Kenyans forecast.
- an incursion could trigger clan and sub-clan rivalries that could worsen matters in Lower Juba.
- if successful, a Lower Juba entity could emerge as a rival to the TFG.
- it was possible that the GOK could be unwittingly providing training to present or future members of the ONLF.
- did the GOK have a plan should their troops be defeated?
- was the GOK willing to persevere if their was a negative outcome?

-- what would be the domestic repercussions of a defeat?
-- what would be the GOK's response if the TFG or the GOE had a change of heart?

He concluded by suggesting that there should be more conventional and convenient ways to accomplish the same end. Could, for example, the trained Somalis help Kenya to re-take Kismayo?

10. (C) NSC Senior Director for African Affairs Michelle Gavin praised the GOK's willingness not to be passive and to think through the challenge, rather than allowing pressures to build. She expressed USG willingness to think through other strategies with the GOK.

Kenyan Delegation Responds to
USG Skepticism

11. (C) In response to A/S Carson's questions, Wetangula insisted that the GOK had simulated the campaign and was satisfied that all potential stumbling blocks had been addressed. Minister of Defense Haji highlighted the financial importance of Kismayo port in Lower Juba to al-Shabaab, the unpopularity of al-Shabaab, and the inability of the TFG to combat al-Shabaab in Lower Juba as reasons for backing the initiative. Creating a Kenyan-controlled fiefdom in Lower Juba was not part of the Kenyan plan. The GOK faced a very serious security threat, which had to be addressed.

12. (C) Chief of the Armed Forces General Staff General Kianga in turn argued that an attack into Lower Juba would relieve pressure on the TFG in Mogadishu. Resources spent on the initiative, he said, would do more to improve the TFG's fortunes than money sent to Mogadishu. As to the domestic reaction, Kianga believed that the GOK would be accused by its population of irresponsibility if it ignored the threat posed by al-Shabaab.

13. (C) National Security and Intelligence Service Director

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Major-General Gichangi reasoned that it would take time for the international community and AMISOM to build a capable TFG security force, but al-Shabaab's increasing links with al-Qaeda argued for action now. Gichangi alleged links between Pakistan, Yemen, and al-Shabaab in Somalia and noted that cost to the USG should Somalia become another source of international terrorism.

14. (C) Gichangi believed that the GOK had done its clan homework. It was engaged at the grassroots in the Juba area. It had sponsored a "major Ogaden clan" meeting, and a similar conclave was scheduled with the Marehan the following week.

15. (C) Wetangula acknowledged that the Kenyan undertaking was risky. He argued that it would not, however, create a rival to the TFG, as it was a TFG initiative and there would not be a single Kenyan boot on the ground in Somalia. Frequent consultations with the GOE had allayed fears that work with the Ogaden would inadvertently create problems for Meles's government. Wetangula alleged that the Kenyan effort was not just military. The GOK was training administrators, teachers, and nurses, and wanted to ensure that a capable administration was in place should the initiative succeed. The GOK would persevere regardless, as it "had no choice." "This is a constitutional responsibility," Wetangula said.

16. (C) The GOK was not inviting the USG to get involved, Wetangula concluded, but to support the Kenyan effort. "The threat is there," Wetangula said, "We can see it, we can feel it."

17. (C) A/S Carson praised the delegations "powerful, thoughtful" arguments and agreed that the GOK and the USG share common concerns. The USG was grappling with the threats posed to the region by developments in Somalia but, A/S Carson concluded, "I would be wrong if I suggested encouragement" to you. He promised to consult further in Washington, however. Wetangula concluded by "imploring" A/S Carson to consider assistance. "I may not have been as convincing as I should have been," he said, but "the threat is real." After a strong plea by Wetangula A/S Carson said he would look into the feasibility of a U.S. Team going to Kenya to review the technical details of the Kenyan plan. However, A/S Carson said he still maintained deep reservations about the success of Kenya's efforts.

Comment

18. (C) The January 30 meeting marked Wetangula's third attempt to win A/S Carson's support for the Jubaland initiative. To do so, he brought a very high-level team to Addis Ababa, and each of the team members made passionate, if not always persuasive, arguments for supporting the Kenyan effort. The persistence of the Kenyan campaign to win backing for their undertaking suggests, if nothing else, that they have finally become aware that years of increasing instability in next-door Somalia have serious implications for their own country's future, and that the problem must somehow be addressed. The GOK's proposed solution continues to raise more questions than it answers, but the desire of the GOK to do something about Somalia seems genuine.

Participants

19. (U) USG:

Assistant Secretary for African Affairs Johnnie Carson

NSC Senior Director for African Affairs Michelle Gavin
Ambassador to the African Union Michael Battle
Charge d'Affaires, Embassy Addis Ababa, John Yates
Counselor for Somalia Affairs, Embassy Nairobi, Bob Patterson
(notetaker)
DCM, U.S. Mission to the African Union, Joel Maybury

Government of Kenya:

Minister of Foreign Affairs Moses Wetangula
Minister of Defense Yusuf Haji
Director, NSIS, Major-General Michael Gichangi
Chief of Kenyan General Staff, General Jeremiah Kianga
YATES

=====CABLE ENDS=====