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BBC Summary of World Broadcasts

February 16, 1987, Monday

Somali Reports on "Provocative Attacks" by Ethiopian Forces

SOURCE: Radio France International 1245 gmt 13 Feb 87

(i) Text of report ME/8492/ii

Mogadishu home service in Somali (i) 0330 gmt 15 Feb and (ii) 1400 gmt 14 Feb 87

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Journalists from the SDR Ministry of Information and National Guidance, representatives of foreign news agencies based in Somalia, and some military attaches of foreign missions based in Mogadishu yesterday [13th February] toured areas provocatively attacked by Ethiopian forces. They saw corpses of soldiers killed in the attack, captured soldiers and weapons. A Somali national news agency reporter, who was among the journalists, said that the areas they toured were littered with the corpses of well over 300 Ethiopian soldiers. The reporter added that many wounded Ethiopians were taken prisoner there.

The Ethiopian forces, who launched the provocative attack, consisted of a brigade. They carried out their attack from Degeh Bur and Werder [east Ethiopia]. Eleven of the 22 tanks used in the attack were also captured. Four transport vehicles, many weapons of various kinds, including light weapons and communications sets were also captured.

The reporter said that Somalia lost 30 soldiers in the attack and 25 of its men were wounded. No weapons were lost. The reporter added that Somali defence forces in Togdheer region scored successive victories against Ethiopian forces which launched the provocative attack.

During their tour of the areas, the journalists were accompanied by the Commander of the 26th Division of the SDR Armed Forces, Brig-Gen Muhammad Sa'id Morgan, who briefed them on the attack and how it was halted and repulsed.

(ii) Excerpts from report:

The SDR First Vice-President, who is also the SDR First Prime Minister, Challe Muhammad Ali Samatur, today attended the SDR Justice Day ceremony held at the headquarters of the SDR Justice Department in Mogadishu. . . [He] spoke about the unprovoked aggression of the Ethiopian Armed Forces against SDR territory, particularly on Togdheer region, on the 12th of this month. He said that following the Jibuti meeting between SDR President Challe Muhammad Siyar Barreh and Ethiopian leader Mengistu Ha ile Mariam in January 1986, talks were taking place between **Somalia and Ethiopia** in search of peace and how to end the differences between the two countries.

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On the stand of the Somali government [after the Ethiopian aggression] towards the peace talks, he said there is no change on our part whatsoever, but that what is required is for the Ethiopian government to declare its stand towards the peace negotiations between the two countries following the aggression by Ethiopia against the SDR on the 12th of this month, which is contrary to the ongoing peace talks. Challe Samatur added that the ongoing peace talks between the two countries were in the interests of the peoples of the two nations and the stability of the whole of the Horn of Africa.

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[Note: Radio France International (1245 gmt 13 Feb 87) reported that Somali Foreign Minister Abdurahman Jama Barreh was in Paris on a private visit and a reporter asked him for his reaction to the Ethiopian attack. He replied: "Really we were surprised by this attack and we do not understand why Ethiopia launched it. As you know, in January 1986 President Siyad Barreh and President Mengistu met in Jibuti and agreed to normalise their relations after so many years of conflict and differences. They realised they had to make peace to begin a new era of detente. In this context the two heads of state appointed an ad hoc committee to find a peaceful solution. This committee met in Addis Ababa in May 1986 and in Mogadishu last September. Although these two meetings achieved no concrete results, the two parties were in favour of continuing dialogue, and a third meeting of the ad hoc committee was planned for the near future. However this air and land attack against Somalia will do great damage to future negotiations. Despite this we are in favour of continuing to negotiate. But if Ethiopia wants war, we shall defend ourselves."]

LANGUAGE: ENGLISH

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