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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

INFORMATION REPORT

25X1A

COUNTRY Ethiopia/Somaliland

SUBJECT Road Conditions

25X1A

PLACE ACQUIRED
(BY SOURCE)

DATE ACQUIRED
(BY SOURCE)

DATE (OF INFO.)

RESPONSIVE TO	
1	2
CD NO.	
OO/C NO.	
ORR NO.	
DAS NO.	
OCI NO.	

DATE DISTR. 25 Jun 54

NO. OF PAGES 3

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SOURCE

1. In all the area over which I traveled in Ethiopia and Somalia, I found no roads which could be classed as first-class on a point-to-point basis. There are some stretches of paved road just outside some of the principal towns which are in fairly good repair, but even these must be traveled with caution since one is never sure when he might come unexpectedly to a hole in the hard surfacing which would wreck an auto or truck. The paving, such as it is, is rough concrete laid by the Italians at the time of their conquest of Ethiopia, and not maintained since they left. Holes are patched by dumping crushed rock into them, instead of by pouring in new concrete. The greater portion of the highway mileage is natural dirt, sometimes gravelled, but mostly sandy soil. The Italians also had built a number of good bridges over the streams crossed by principal roads, but practically all of these have been demolished either by the elements or by damage during military operations. They have been replaced by wooden bridges which we consider unsafe for weights as low as two tons.

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2. Most of the material, machinery and equipment used in the exploration operations with which I am familiar was formerly laid down by ships at the British Somaliland port of Berbera on the Gulf of Aden, and moved in to the scene of operations by truck. The road from Berbera to Hargeisa, a distance of 110 miles, varies with the weather to the extent that it is possible to make the trip in about five days most of the time, but becomes impassable in wet weather. Most of it is natural road and most of the waterways are not bridged. From Hargeisa, south to Auareh, a distance of 135 kilometers, there are a few stretches of hard surfaced road, but it is not maintained at all, and we have found it impossible to use it. We just drive alongside it and make better time. This stretch may be traveled in two hours in good weather, but it takes from 10 to 12 hours in wet weather.
3. The road from Auareh to Uardere is mostly natural dirt with a very few remaining stretches of hard surfacing so short and poorly maintained that they are of little help. In addition, such bridges as there are are not safe with loads of more than two tons, and we simply turn off the road and hunt a place to ford the dry washes. Around Dik on this road, almost midway between Auareh and Uardere, the entire countryside floods out in the rainy season, and it is impossible to move equipment. The British have a small outpost and radio contact station at Dik.
4. Going eastward from Uardere to Galardi the road is simply a sand track with no surfacing of any kind. It can be traveled most of the time with four-wheel drive vehicles equipped with sand tires. Even this traffic is stopped by wet weather.
5. The road southward from Uardere toward Belet Uen by way of Scillave is the same type encountered south of Auareh, with intermittent short stretches of hard surfacing and no dependable bridges. The portion from Ferfer on the Italian Somaliland border to Belet Uen is surfaced all the way. It is in bad condition, but better than most. From Ferfer, northwest toward Callafo, the section of road as far as Mustahil is surfaced but in poor condition and has some particularly bad stretches around Mustahil itself and at Sulsul. The remainder of the road on to Callafo is natural road, and is passable most of the time in dry weather.
6. In British Somaliland the road from Hargeisa to Jibuti is passable most of the time but at very slow speeds. It takes a really hard driver to make it in a pickup truck, but fleets of other trucks, with four-wheel drive, can usually make it, although it may take as much as two weeks. It is all natural road, and here again the rainy season may stop traffic completely.
7. Going west from Hargeisa toward Harar and Addis Ababa, the portion of the road as far as the turn at Dareda Abdille is always passable except under extreme bad weather conditions, but at that point the road gets out of sandy soil areas until just before Tug Wajale. This muddy stretch is absolutely impassable in wet weather, but the remainder of the route to Giggiga can be traveled at any time, although it will be necessary in many cases to turn off the road into the brush to detour around the worst places. The road from Giggiga to Harar and on to Dire Dawa was hard surfaced with concrete by the Italians and only recently have attempts at maintenance been revived. This road is passable at all times. Year-round operations have now shown that it is more efficient to have equipment brought down the railroad from Jibuti to Dire Dawa and then trucked in over the route via Harar, Giggiga, Hargeisa, and Uardere.

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8. The best road I found in Ethiopia was between Dire Dawa and Addis Ababa, all concrete, with the better portion of that being Auasc and Addis Ababa. The Italians had built good bridges and it must have been a very good road at one time. Maintenance is still poor, with holes in the concrete which are intermittently filled with crushed rock, and the bridges are all gone, replaced by wooden structures. The road is passable in all but the most extreme conditions of weather, but at any time it is better to have a four-wheel drive vehicle to get by the worst places.
9. I have noted on the map of the Addis Ababa area that symbols in reference to air transportation indicate that the landing grounds at Auasc and at Dessie are abandoned. Actually, both of these landing fields are used regularly by the Ethiopian Airlines. The Auasc field is used regularly by the two Convairs operated by the airline, and there are regular shuttle flights by DC-3 planes from Addis Ababa to connect at that point because the other planes cannot take off with full payload from the eight thousand-foot-high airport at Addis Ababa.

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LIBRARY SUBJECT & AREA CODES

754.22	120
754.22	320
754.8	320
754.8	120
754.5	120
754.5	320
757.4	320

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