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imagery analysis report

# Status and Disposition of Ethiopian and Somali Forces in the Balenbale, Galdogob, and Abdiwaq Areas (S)

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# THE STATUS AND DISPOSITION OF ETHIOPIAN AND SOMALI FORCES IN THE BALENBALE, GALDOGOB, AND ABDIWAQ AREAS (S)

## INTRODUCTION

1. This report has been prepared in response to Intelligence Community inquiries concerning the disposition of forces along the Ethiopian-Somali border. It provides an imagery-derived analysis of the status and disposition of Ethiopian and Somali forces deployed in the Balenbale, Galdogob, and Abdiwaq areas of the central border region (Figure 1 and Table 1). The report covers the period from July 1982 [redacted] and includes one locator map, three area maps, one table, and five annotated photographs. (S/WN)

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2. Since mid-1982, the border towns of Balenbale, Galdogob, and Abdiwaq, along the disputed provisional administrative line between Ethiopia and Somalia, have been areas of unsettled tensions and hostilities between the two countries. In July 1982, a combined Ethiopian and Somali Democratic Salvation Front (SDSF) force attacked and captured the towns of Balenbale and Galdogob in Somali-claimed territory. Since that time, these towns and the surrounding areas have been controlled by Ethiopian forces. Major Somali military forces have also been concentrated in these two areas to prevent further Ethiopian incursions into Somalia. During this same time period, the town of Abdiwaq in Ethiopian territory has remained under Somali military control. Ethiopian forces have not threatened the Somali presence in Abdiwaq and the surrounding area. (S/WN)

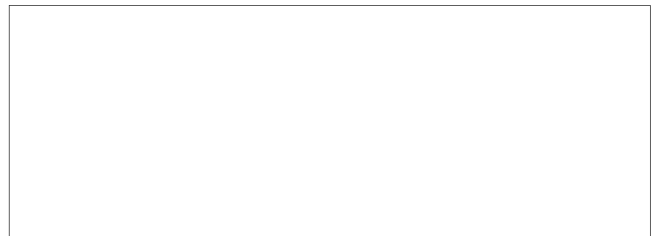
3. Most of the forces deployed in these areas can be identified from imagery. [redacted]

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## BALENBALE AREA

### Overview

4. In July 1982, combined Ethiopian and SDSF infantry forces—supported by armor, artillery, and aircraft—attacked and captured the Somali-occupied town of Balenbale (Figure 2). After securing Balenbale and the surrounding area, these forces began to prepare a perimeter of defensive trenches and personnel firing positions. This defensive network extends 1.5 nautical miles (nm) into Somali-claimed territory. Also during July 1982, Somali forces began to prepare a corresponding network of defensive trenches approximately 3 nm south of the Ethiopian positions. Between August 1982 and December 1984, the opposing forces continued to construct defensive positions and reinforce their ground combat units with additional armor, artillery, and air defense units. [redacted]



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5. The Balenbale area includes two major Ethiopian deployment areas and two major Somali deployment areas. Ethiopian forces have been deployed at Balenbale Complex [redacted] which encircles the town of Balenbale, and at Balenbale Military Concentration Northwest (BE [redacted]) approximately 11 nm northwest of Balenbale. Opposing Somali forces have been deployed at Balenbale Division/Brigade/Battalion Headquarters [redacted] 3 nm south of Balenbale, and at Laan Ijaabo Military Deployment Area [redacted] 14 nm southwest of Balenbale. (S/WN)

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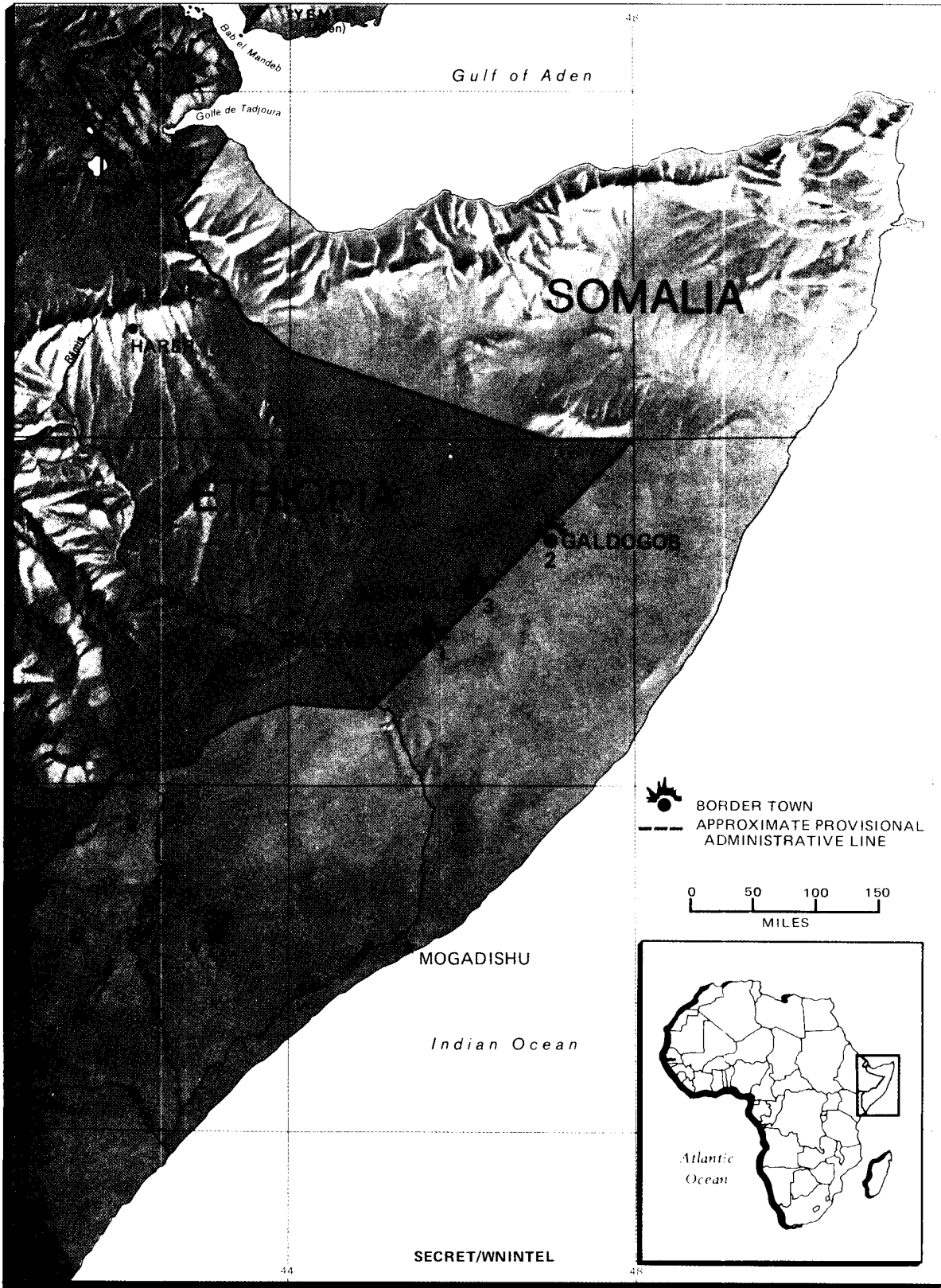


FIGURE 1. LOCATIONS OF BALENBALE, GALDOGOB, AND ABDIWAQ

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**Table 1. Status and Disposition of Ethiopian and Somali Forces  
(Items keyed to Figure 1)**

Item	Forces	Facility/BE No	Description	
1	Balenbale Area Ethiopian Forces	Balenbale Complex [redacted]	Elements of 1 tank bn (14 tanks) 1 BTR-60PB mechanized infantry co (6 APCs) 2 122mm howitzer D-30 bns (24 guns) 1 130mm field gun M-46 btry (4 guns) 2 76mm antitank ZIS-3 btrys (8 guns) 2 BM-21 MRL btrys (8 MRLs) 1 ZSU-23/-4 SPAAG btry (4 SPAAGs) Infantry units (undetermined size)	25X1
		Balenbale Military Concentration Northwest [redacted]	2 122mm howitzer D-30 btrys (8 guns) Infantry units (undetermined size)	25X1
	Somali Forces	Balenbale Division/ Brigade/Battalion Headquarters [redacted]	1 tank co (8 tanks) 1 mechanized infantry platoon (2 APCs) Elements of 2 FA bns (23 guns) Elements of 1 MRL btry (2 MRLs) 1 AA btry (4 guns) 2 mortar btrys (12 mortars) Infantry units (undetermined size)	25X1
		Laan Ijaabo Military Deployment Area [redacted]	1 FA btry (4 guns) Infantry units (undetermined size)	25X1
2	Galdogob Area Ethiopian Forces	Galdogob Military Facility [redacted]	1 tank co (5 tanks) Elements of 1 BTR-60PB mechanized infantry co (3 APCs) Elements of 1 122mm howitzer D-30 bn (8 guns) 1 130mm field gun M-46 bn (12 guns) Elements of 1 76mm antitank ZIS-3 bn (8 guns) 1 ZSU-23/-4 SPAAG btry (4 SPAAGs) Elements of 1 SA-9 SAM btry (2 SA-9 TELs) Infantry units (undetermined size)	25X1
		Galdogob Military Deployment Southeast [redacted]	1 mortar btry (4 mortars) Infantry units (undetermined size)	25X1
		Galdogob Military Camp Northwest [redacted]	Infantry units (undetermined size)	25X1
	Somali Forces	Balli Fintir Deployment Area [redacted]	1 tank co (5 tanks) 1 122mm howitzer D-30 bn (12 guns) Elements of 1 FA bn (8 guns) Infantry units (undetermined size)	25X1
		Balli Fintir Deployment Area Northwest [redacted]	Elements of 1 mechanized infantry co (1 APC) 1 FA btry (4 guns) Elements of 1 37mm AA btry (1 gun) Infantry units (undetermined size)	25X1
3	Abdiwaq Area Somali Forces	Abdiwaq Complex [redacted]	2 AA btrys (4 37mm AA guns and 4 ZU-23 AA guns) Infantry units (undetermined size)	25X1

*This table is classified SECRET/WWINTEL.*

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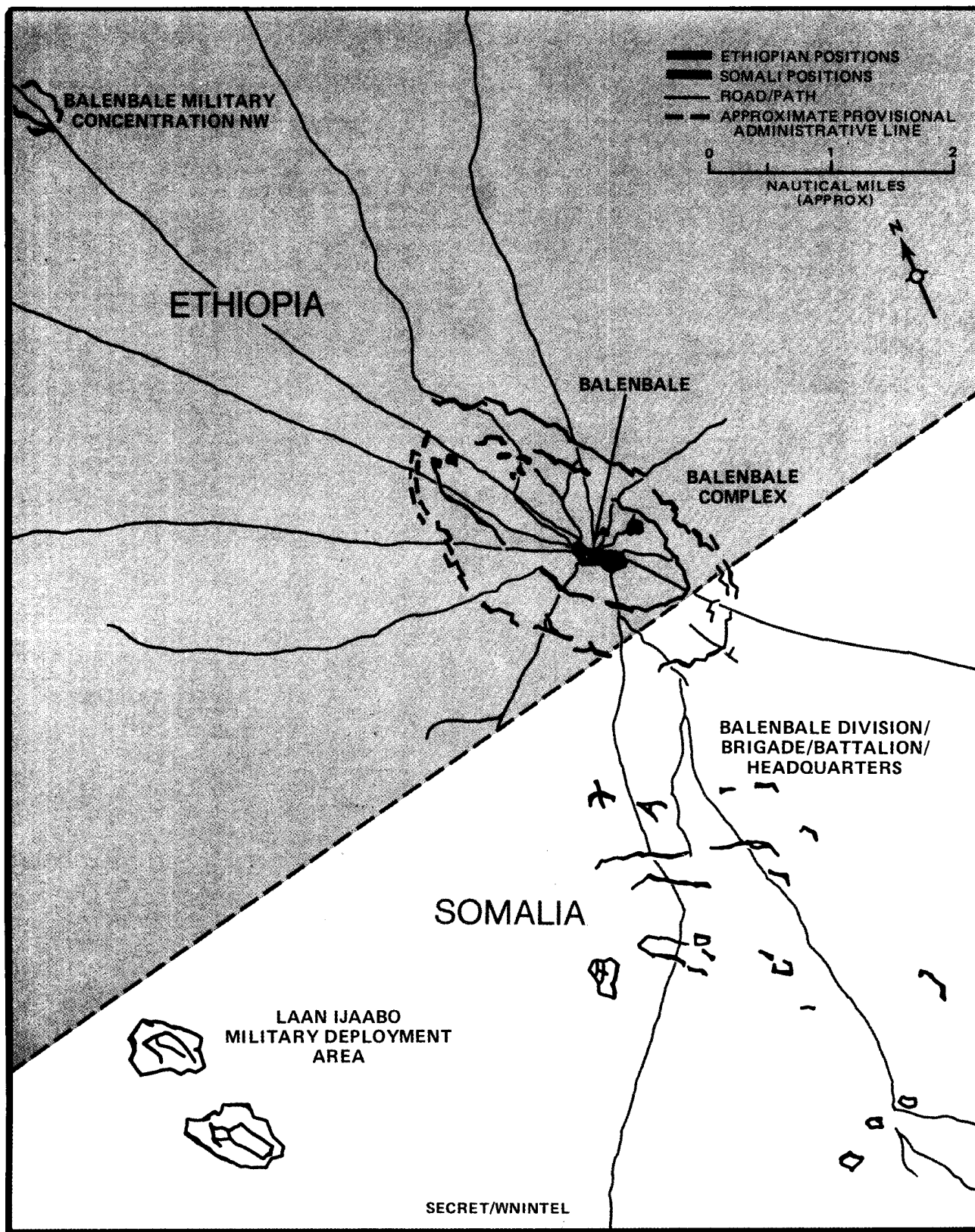


FIGURE 2. BALENBALE AREA

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### **Ethiopian Forces**

6. The Ethiopian forces at Balenbale Complex have been encircled by a series of T-shaped trenches that extend 1.5 nm south of Balenbale into Somali-claimed territory. A cleared field of fire has been prepared in front of these trenches. These trenches support numerous infantry fighting positions and weapons positions. (S/WN)

7. Ethiopian forces deployed at Balenbale Complex included elements of one tank battalion (14 tanks), one mechanized infantry company equipped with BTR-60PB armored personnel carriers (APCs; six APCs), two 122mm howitzer D-30 battalions (24 guns), one 130mm field gun M-46 battery (four guns), two 76mm antitank ZIS-3 batteries (eight guns), two BM-21 multiple rocket launcher (MRL) batteries (eight MRLs), one ZSU-23/-4 self-propelled anti-aircraft gun (SPAAG) battery (four SPAAGs), and infantry units of undetermined size. The tank battalion was deployed in

three company-sized units (three to six tanks each) in revetted positions north and east of Balenbale (Figure 3); the mechanized infantry company was deployed in a grove of trees immediately west of town; the two antitank batteries were positioned east and west of town along the trench line; and the field artillery (FA) battalions, MRL batteries, and SPAAG battery were concentrated 1.5 nm north of the town. All equipment in this area has been deployed in revetted firing positions. (S/WN)

8. The Ethiopian forces at Balenbale Military Concentration Northwest have been encircled by inner and outer networks of trenches separated by a cleared field-of-fire zone approximately 50 meters in width. These positions were occupied by infantry units of undetermined size. Two 122mm howitzer D-30 batteries (eight guns) were in revetted firing positions east of the complex, approximately 100 meters from the defensive perimeter. (S/WN)



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## Somali Forces

9. The Somali forces at Balenbale Division/ Brigade/Battalion Headquarters were deployed approximately 3 nm south of Balenbale, astride three lines of trenches. The first and northernmost line of trenching was prepared between March and December 1984. This network of trenches was 2.5 nm south of the Ethiopian positions at Balenbale and extended 3.5 nm in an east/west direction. The second line of trenching was approximately 3 nm south of the Ethiopian positions and was 4.5 nm in length. The third and final line of trenching was approximately 4 nm south of Balenbale and was 1.5 nm in length. (S/WN)

10. Somali forces in this area included one tank company (eight tanks), one mechanized infantry platoon (two APCs), elements of two FA battalions (23 guns), elements of one MRL battery (two MRLs), one antiaircraft (AA) battery (four AA guns), two mortar batteries (12 mortars), and infantry units of undetermined size. The tank company

and mechanized infantry platoon were deployed in individual, revetted vehicle positions along the first and second lines of trenches. These forward positions were supported by three FA batteries concentrated 4.5 nm south of the deployment area and by one field artillery battery 4.5 nm southwest of the deployment area (Figure 4). This artillery has been augmented by an MRL battery and defended by an AA battery. The MRL battery and AA battery were separated by approximately 600 meters on an east/west linear axis, 800 meters south of the FA concentration. The two mortar batteries were positioned within approximately 800 meters of each other and were astride the second line of trenching. (S/WN)

11. The Somali forces at Laan Ijaabo Military Deployment Area, approximately 10 nm west of the Somali concentration at Balenbale Division/ Brigade/Battalion Headquarters, consisted of two trench-enclosed areas occupied by infantry units of undetermined size. One FA battery (4 guns) has been deployed in a revetted firing position in this area. (S/WN)

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### GALDOGOB AREA

#### Overview

12. In July 1982, combined Ethiopian and SDSF forces also attacked and captured the Somali town of Galdogob (Figure 5). After securing the town and surrounding area, the Ethiopian forces began to prepare trenches and to establish a military concentration on the northwestern side of Galdogob. The Somali forces at this time were positioned near the Somali town of Balli Fintir, approximately 11 nm east-northeast of Galdogob. Between August 1982  Ethiopian forces continued to prepare and reinforce their defensive positions in the Galdogob area. Also during this period, Somali forces advanced 5.5 nm

to an area 3.5 nm southwest of Galdogob and prepared several small brush-enclosed defensive areas and several lines of personnel trenching. In 

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13. The Galdogob area includes three major Ethiopian deployment areas and two major Somali deployment areas. Ethiopian forces have been deployed at Galdogob Military Facility (BE  which encircles the town of Galdo-

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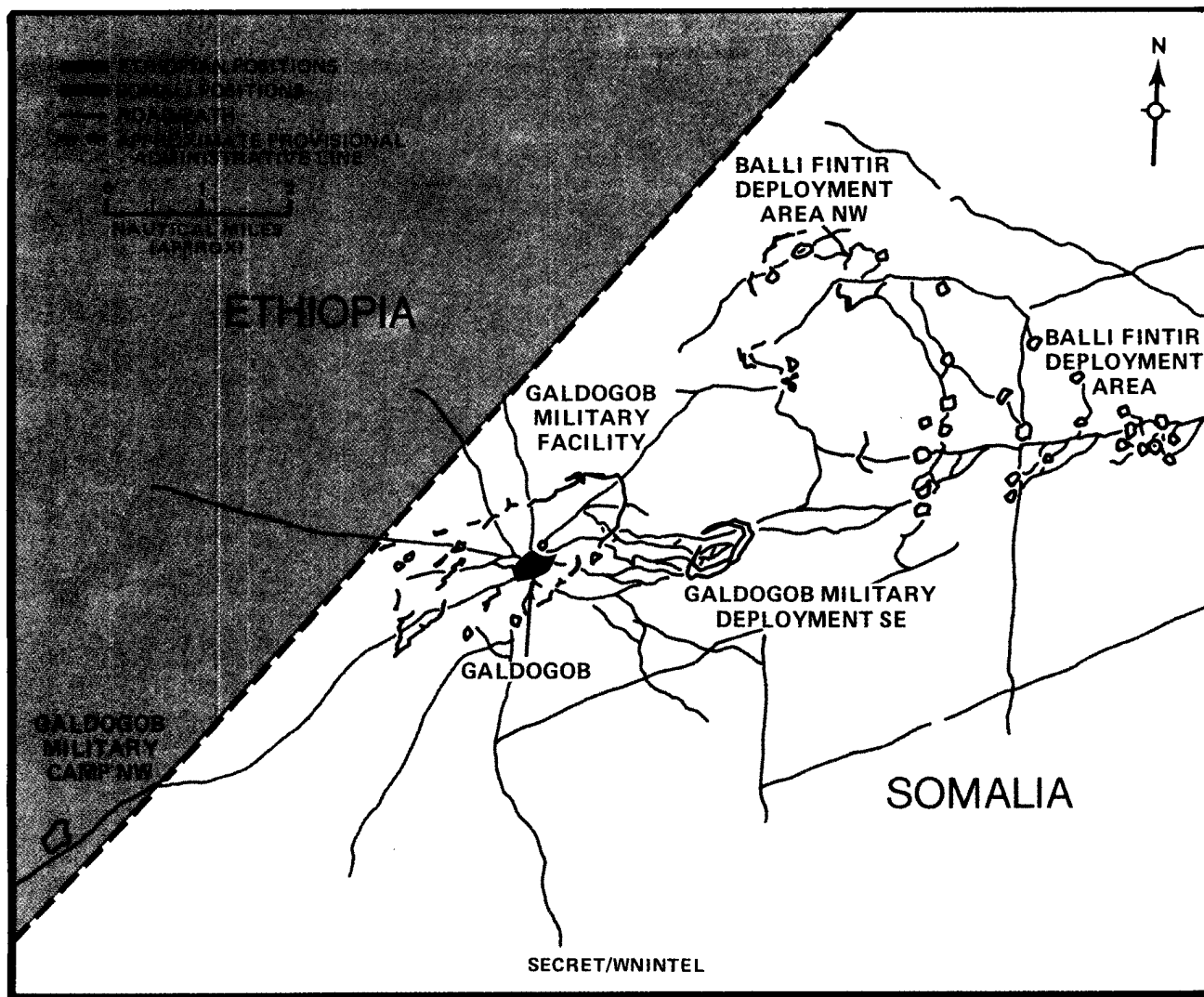


FIGURE 5. GALDOGOB AREA

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gob and extends 1.5 nm into Somali-claimed territory; at Galdogob Military Deployment Southeast [redacted] 1.5 nm southeast of the town; and at Galdogob Military Camp Northwest (BE [redacted] approximately 8 nm southwest of Galdogob. Somali forces have been deployed at Balli Fintir Deployment Area [redacted] 4.5 nm northeast of Galdogob, and at Balli Fintir Deployment Area Northwest [redacted] approximately 3 nm northeast of town. (S/WN)

guns; Figure 6), elements of one 122mm howitzer D-30 battalion (eight guns), elements of one 76mm antitank gun ZIS-3 battalion (eight guns), one ZSU-23/-4 SPAAG battery (four SPAAGs), elements of one SA-9 battery (two SA-9 transporter erector launchers [TELS]; Figure 7), and infantry units of undetermined size. The tank company, FA battalions, air defense batteries, and mechanized infantry company were concentrated 1.25 nm northwest of town. The artillery battalions and air defense batteries were positioned in prepared, revetted firing positions, while the tanks and APCs were parked/concealed under trees, brush, and canvas. The antitank battalion was positioned along the northeastern trench line 1.5 nm east of town. (S/WN)

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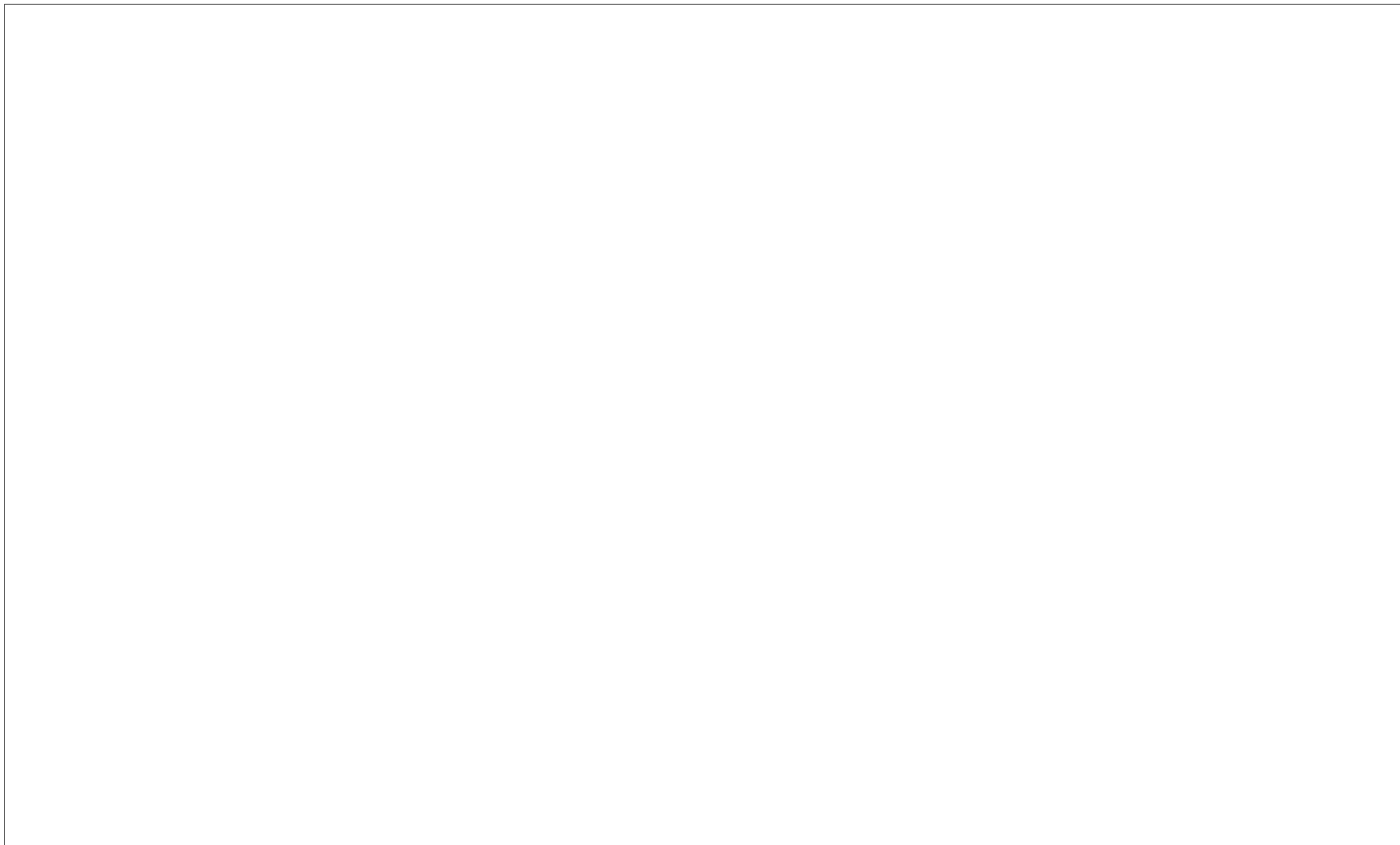
**Ethiopian Forces**

14. The Ethiopian forces at Galdogob Military Facility have been encircled by a series of linear trenchworks, brush, and infantry fighting positions. The two primary lines of defensive positions are approximately 1,000 meters to the north and south of Galdogob. These positions each extend 1.5 nm in a northeast/southwest direction. (S/WN)

16. The Ethiopian forces at Galdogob Military Deployment Southeast have been encircled by an inner perimeter of trenching/infantry fighting positions and an outer perimeter of brush separated by a cleared field-of-fire zone approximately 100 meters in width. These positions were occupied by infantry units of undetermined size. Additionally, one mortar battery (four mortars) was in a revetted firing position near the center of the facility. (S/WN)

15. Ethiopian forces deployed at Galdogob Military Facility included elements of one tank company (five tanks), elements of one BTR-60-equipped mechanized infantry company (three APCs), one 130mm field gun M-46 battalion (12

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17. The Ethiopian forces at Galdogob Military Camp Northwest have been enclosed by an outer perimeter of infantry fighting positions, a center perimeter of brush, and an inner perimeter of defensive trenches with infantry units of undetermined size. No military equipment has been observed here. (S/WN)

### **Somali Forces**

18. The Somali forces at Balli Fintir Deployment Area were deployed 1.5 nm northeast of Galdogob Military Deployment Southeast and 4.5 nm northeast of Galdogob. The Somali military units were primarily enclosed in numerous brush-secured areas along the Galdogob-Galcaio Road. In addition, one trench line, approximately 1,000 meters long, was 1.5 nm northeast of Galdogob Military Deployment Southeast. (S/WN)

19. Somali forces deployed in this area included one tank company (five tanks) and one 122mm howitzer D-30 battalion (12 guns), elements of one FA battalion (eight guns), and infantry units of undetermined size. The tank company (Figure 8; one tank not on graphic) and artillery

battalions were concentrated within four separately secured areas 5.3 nm northeast of Galdogob. (S/WN)

20. Somali forces at Balli Fintir Deployment Area Northwest were deployed behind three crescent-shaped trench lines. Each trench was 1.25 nm in length and was between 2.25 nm and 3.75 nm northeast of Galdogob. Numerous infantry fighting and weapons positions were directly behind these trenches. In addition to the trenching, the Somali forces in this area have prepared separately secured brush- and trench-enclosed areas that contained numerous infantry fighting positions and revetted vehicle positions. (S/WN)

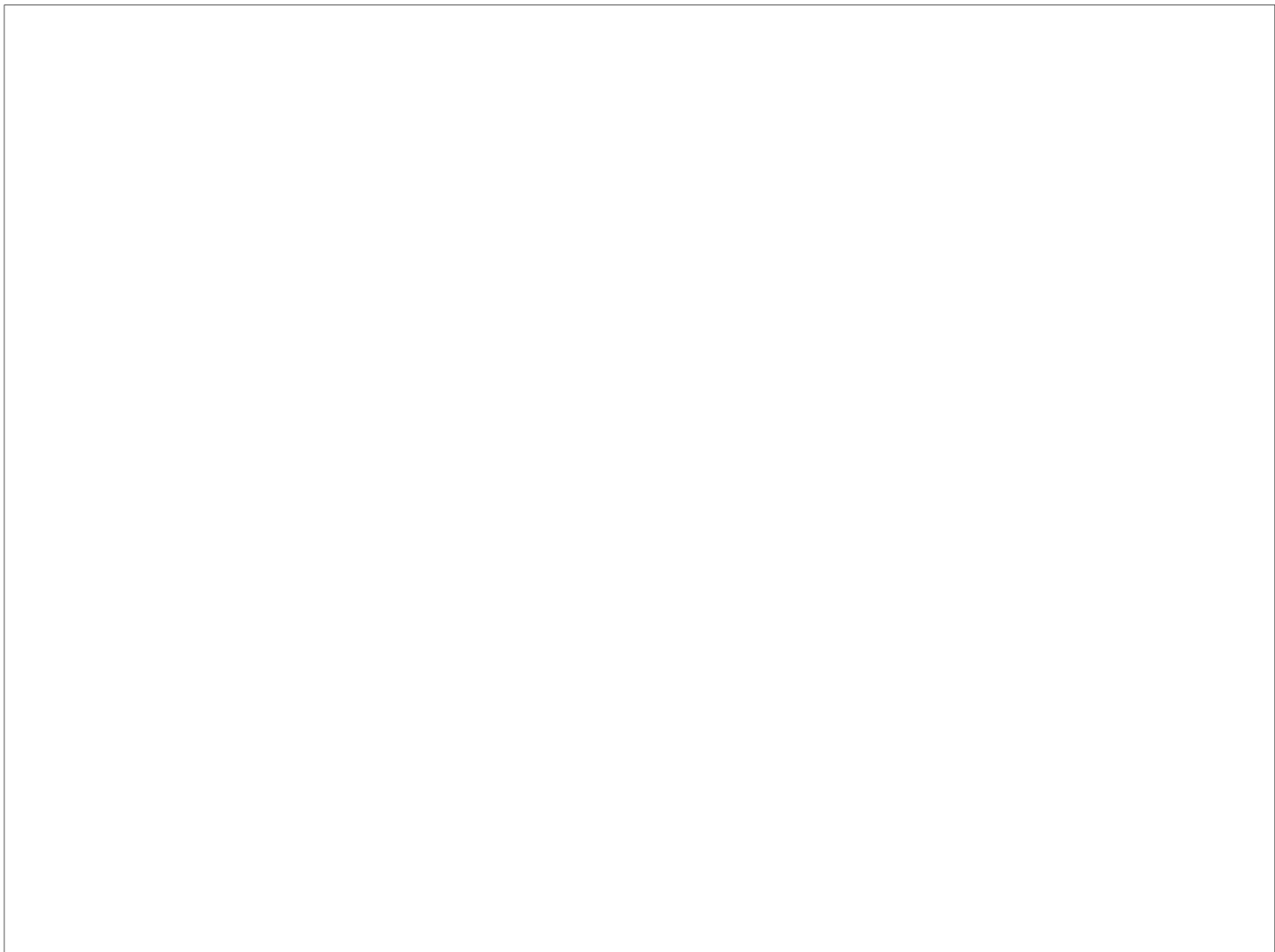
21. The Somali forces deployed in this area included elements of one mechanized infantry company (one APC), one FA battery (four guns), elements of one 37mm AA battery (one AA gun), and infantry units of undetermined size. The FA battery was positioned 3.75 nm northeast of Galdogob. The AA battery and mechanized infantry company were positioned directly behind the trench line closest to the Ethiopian perimeter around Galdogob. (S/WN)

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### **ABDIWAQ AREA**

#### **Overview**

22. Somali military units have historically occupied and controlled the town of Abdiwaq (Figure 9), 1 nm west of the approximate provisional administrative line between Ethiopia and Somalia. Since late April 1982, these forces have expanded and reinforced the defensive perimeter around the town approximately 9 nm into Ethiopian territory. Ethiopian forces have not threatened the Somali occupation of Abdiwaq and the surrounding area. No Ethiopian forces have been observed within 20 nm of Abdiwaq. (S/WN)

23. The Abdiwaq area includes one major Somali deployment area, Abdiwaq Complex (BE  which encircles the town of Abdiwaq. The Somali forces have been deployed in a series of defensive trenches that protect all

approaches to the area and extend approximately 9 nm into the central Ogaden region of Ethiopia. In addition, numerous separately brush-secured areas have been observed within the defensive perimeter on the northwestern side of town. Numerous infantry fighting positions and weapons positions have been prepared in these areas and along the trench lines. (S/WN)

24. Somali forces deployed in defense of Abdiwaq included two AA batteries (each with two 37mm AA guns and two ZU-23 AA guns) and infantry units of undetermined size. The AA batteries were positioned within a brush-enclosed perimeter, approximately 200-300 meters to the northeast and southwest of town. Heavy vehicle tracks within the defensive perimeter of Abdiwaq indicated the presence of additional military forces or equipment. (S/WN)

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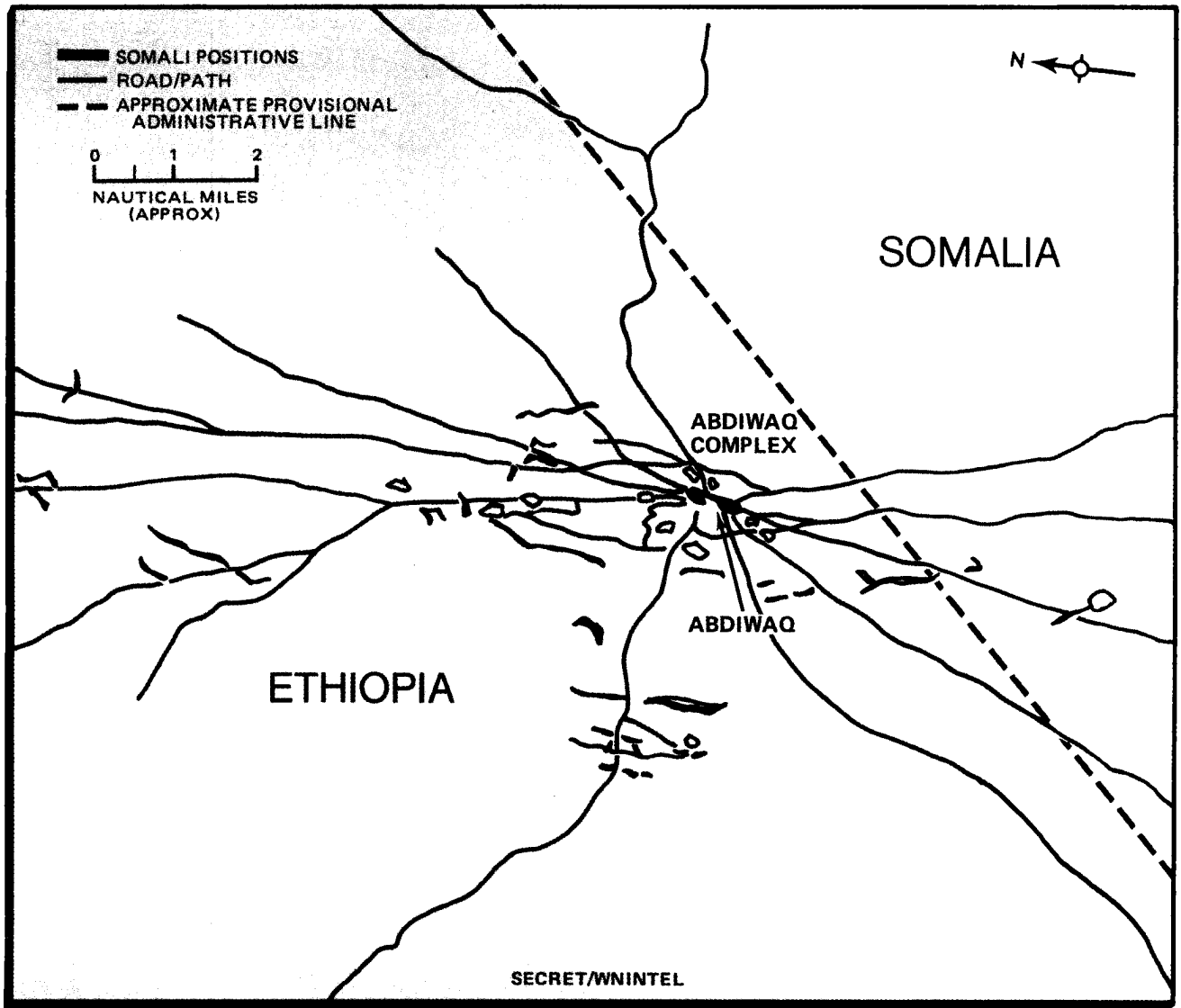


FIGURE 9. ABDIWAQ AREA

REFERENCES

IMAGERY

All applicable satellite imagery from [redacted] was used in the preparation of this report. (S/WN)

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Comments and queries regarding this report may be directed to [redacted] Northeast Africa Branch, Near East/South Asia Division, Imagery Exploitation Group, NPIC, or [redacted]

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