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**\*\* D J I B O U T I \*\***

ACRONYMS:

ADDHL - Djibouti Association for the Defense of Human Rights and

Liberties

DRA - Djibouti Relief Association

FDF - Front of Democratic Forces

FRUD - Front for the Restauration of Unity and Democracy

FNS - Force Nationale de Securite

MND - Mouvement National Djiboutien

MSR - Mouvement pour le Salut et la Reconstruction

MUD - Movement pour l'Unite de la Democratie

PCRD - Parti Centriste et des Reformes Democratiques

PND - Parti National Democratique

PRD - Parti du Renouveau Democratique

RPP - Rassemblement Populaire pour le Progres

UDD - Union des Democrates Djiboutiens

UDSJ - Union for Democracy and Social Justice

UMD - Union des Movements Democratiques

**\*\* THE GOVERNMENT \*\***

TWO MINISTERS DISMISSED

(Reuter 16 Oct 94) DJIBOUTI - Djibouti's Minister of Youth, Sports and Cultural Affairs, Muhammad Ibrahim Muhammad, and the Minister of Labour and Training, Ithirow Hamadou, were dismissed on Sunday, an official decree said.

President Hassan Gouled Aptidon's decree said they had been dismissed for behaviour incompatible with their responsibilities as members of the government. It gave no further explanation and made no mention of their replacements.

Both ministers belong to the Afar ethnic group which supports rebels who have been fighting in northern Djibouti for several years. They were appointed when the government was formed after elections in February.

**\*\* PEACE TALKS AND DIVIDED OPPOSITION \*\***

PEACE TALKS PRESS ON  
(ION 17 Sep 94, p.3)  
Secret peace talks between delegations of the Djibouti government and the opposition movement Front pour la Restauration de l'Unite et de la Democratie at meetings of the joint commissions in recent weeks appear to have made some progress. The meetings were held on Djibouti territory in the Hanle Plain and at Adailou, with the most recent one being held last week at Ribta, 15 km from Tadjourah in the northern part of the country. Discussions centered around a number of subjects such as the quotas of FRUD members integrated into the government armed forces, the powers to be given local administrative bodies (in the perspective of administrative and economic decentralization), and "common management" of a return to peaceful conditions in Djibouti. The last point is a sticky one because it covers the political reforms demanded by FRUD, such as strengthening the authority of the prime minister and parliament, revising electoral lists, and so on. The government delegation has been led by prime minister Barkat Gourat Hamadou and interior and decentralization minister Idriss Harbi Farah. But the Ribta meeting saw Ismael Omar Guelleh, chef de cabinet to head of state Hassan Gouled Aptidon, present in the corridors outside the conference and sources say he may even have attended the closing meeting...

A REFUSAL FRONT IN PEACE NEGOTIATIONS  
(ION 24 Sep 94, p.3)  
The Front Uni de l'Opposition Djiboutienne (FUOD) headed by Mohamed Ahmed Issa (Cheiko) announced on September 21 that second vice-president Galal Abdourahmen Ahmed, who is also president of the Movement pour le Salut et la Reconstruction (MSR), had been dismissed. Other FUOD officials were confirmed in their posts: Mahdi Ibrahim Ahmed (first vice-president), Abdoulkader Djama Rayaleh (spokesman), Mohamed Houssein Hassan (secretary general), and Kamil Ali Mohamed (deputy secretary general and publisher of the newspaper Al Wahdaa. The dismissal of Galal Abdourahman Ahmed was justified, the Front said, by contacts he had with "the new directorate of Front pour la Restauration de l'Unite et de la Democratie" (FRUD headed by Ougoureh Kifleh Ahmed) and by a meeting he is believed to have had with Djibouti's prime minister, Barkat Gourad Amadou. FUOD leaders are refusing to have anything to do with the "secret negotiations" currently pursued by the Djibouti government and FRUD. The FUOD officials claim that they recognize only "the legitimate FRUD" symbolized in their eyes by the group headed by the movement's former president, Ahmed Dini, who also opposes the negotiations.

[ION editorial comment:] This group of refusniks to the negotiations was denounced as "tired old embittered oppositionists" in a September 15 editorial in the government weekly La Nation, which on the other hand praised the "political maturity" of FRUD leaders who are negotiating with the government. The same editorial admitted the existence of a group of politicians inside the government majority who "do not believe in or do not wish to see a peace agreement" since they "wish to seize the monopoly of this peace movement and are even ready to reject it by pretending that they were not its originators"... The newspaper's allegations therefore target members of the Djibouti government who like the minister of justice Moumin Bahdon Farah and of industry Ali Mahamade Houmed, have been excluded from current peace discussions even though they had all pleaded in favor of moderation towards rebel members of FRUD at a time when the government majority wished only to fight.

DINI'S FACTION REAFFIRMS PURSUIT OF ARMED STRUGGLE  
(Reuter 30 Sep 94)  
PARIS - An outlawed Djibouti opposition group reaffirmed on Friday its commitment to armed struggle to achieve the overthrow of the Djibouti government.

The Front for the Restoration of Unity and Democracy (FRUD) made the announcement in a statement received in the French capital at the close of a six-day congress in a northern area of the tiny Red Sea republic.

"Those attending the congress unanimously reaffirmed their determination to pursue armed struggle until their political goals are satisfied," the statement said.

The statement signed by FRUD vice president Mohamed Adoyta Youssouf, said the group also chose a new executive committee led by Ahmed Dini Ahmed, a former Djibouti prime minister.

It also appealed to the international community to pressure Djibouti to begin talks aimed at a political settlement.

The group said it convened the new congress to clarify the political situation in the east African nation.

FRUD was apparently referring to reconciliation talks begun last summer by Djibouti President Hassan Gouled Aptidon with a FRUD breakaway faction...

FRUD has denounced the talks as an attempt "to deceive national and international opinion" and has said it backs only the "legal" FRUD leadership headed by Ahmed Dini...

NEW FRUD EXECUTIVE BODY SUSPENDS OLD LEADERSHIP  
(SWB 30 Sep 94 [AFP in French, 5 Oct 94])  
Jibuti: Yesterday, the National Congress of the Afar rebel movement, the Front for the Restoration of Unity and Democracy [FRUD], barred former FRUD Chairman Ahmad Dini Ahmad and former FRUD Deputy Chairman Muhammad Adoyta from exercising "any activity or responsibility" within the movement.

In a communique copied to AFP and signed by FRUD Chairman Ali Mohamed Daoud [name and position as received], the FRUD National Congress stated that the two former executives were no longer qualified "to speak on behalf of the FRUD or to commit it in any manner". This "temporary disciplinary action" is expected to be formally endorsed at a forthcoming FRUD congress, "the only organ competent to decide the dismissal of an executive member", the communique added...

PRD SEES THINGS DARKLY  
(ION 15 Oct 94, p.3)  
The second congress of Parti du Renouveau Democratique (PRD, opposition), due to have been held at Obock in the northern part of the country on September 29 and 30, was finally postponed. PRD official decided they would celebrate only the second anniversary of the party's founding and planned it for October 7 at the Djibouti Sheraton. PRD president (and ex-minister) Mohamed Djama Elabe called for regular meetings with other opposition movements in order to "work out a common program of Djibouti's opposition". He said that although the guns had fallen silent in recent months, "peace is getting bogged down" and he presented three proposals from his party.

First, PRD wants to see the "signature of an immediate and definitive cease-fire" between the belligerents (Djibouti government and Afar rebels in Front pour la Restauration de l'Unite et de la Democratie). Second, PRD is calling for concrete administrative and political decentralization "which extends into the districts and constituencies and even beyond". Finally, the party considers that "nothing positive has appeared so far" during the nine months of negotiations between the government and one faction of FRUD. Elabe indicated that he feared a possible resumption of armed fighting and he called for "a real dialogue" between the government and the country's established opposition.

**\*\* FOREIGN RELATIONS \*\***

BORDER POSTS REOPEN  
(ION 3 Oct 94, p.3)  
Djibouti's border posts at Loyada (on its frontier with Somaliland) and Galafi (on the western frontier with Ethiopia) have been reopened. The Loyada post was closed by the Djibouti authorities for four months following a number of frontier incidents and during that period, food supplies were shuttled into Somaliland through the ports of Djibouti and Berbera.

Reopening the Galafi post is directly linked with a calm in the armed conflict between the Djibouti government and members of Front pour la Restauration de l'Unite et de la Democratie (FRUD), since political negotiations are presently going on. The post on the Ethiopian frontier had been closed for three years because of Djibouti's civil war. However, reopening it sparks off another "war", that of the khat imported from Ethiopia for Djibouti. Afar tribesmen who had used the Galafi post, in western Djibouti, in 1991 to bring their illegal consignments of khat (nicknamed "Scud" due to each packet's missile-like shape, ION No 481) had been a serious competitor for the state-backed Societe d'Importation du Khat (SOGIK) and a threat for state revenues.

DJIBOUTI, ETHIOPIA ISSUE JOINT COMMUNIQUE  
(SWB 10 Oct 94 [VOEE in English, 7 Oct 94])  
Ethiopia and Jibuti have issued a joint communique in which both sides reiterated to strengthen their good-neighbourly relations of friendship and cooperation. The communique followed a four-day official working visit to Jibuti by President Meles Zenawi...

The two parties underscored the vital role being played by the Ethio-Jibuti railway in linking the two countries and peoples. They agreed to intensify their efforts to find means and ways of rehabilitating the railway, restructuring the organization and reinforcing security along the railway line. The two parties underlined the need to reinforce their cooperation in the (?domain) of telecommunication, particularly in the utilization of the transit facilities available at Jibuti. The Ethiopian side assured its Jibuti counterpart that it will take all necessary measures to increase its use of the port of Jibuti...

PROFITABLE REFUGEES  
(ION 15 Oct 94, p.2)  
According to an Arab diplomatic source, Saudi Arabia and Djibouti are studying the possibility of the Horn of Africa country setting up a well-equipped military camp to receive the hundreds of South Yemeni military who took refuge in Djibouti just before the Yemen northern army captured Aden during the recent Yemeni civil conflict. The military are currently lodged in Djibouti hotels. Head of state Hassan Gouled Aptidon is believed to have agreed in principle on condition that his country is not transformed into an operations base for South Yemenis and that they are merely "passing through". In return, the Djibouti government has asked Saudi Arabia for financial aid to the tune of USD 2 million, a price which the Saudis have reportedly esteemed somewhat high.

DJIBOUTI "FAVORABLY CONSIDERING" DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS WITH ISRAEL  
(SWB 19 Oct 94 [Voice of Israel external service, Jerusalem, in English 17 Oct 94]) Israel and Jibuti are due to announce diplomatic relations in the near future. The ambassador of the Arab north East African country told Israel's ambassador to the United Nations that his country is favourably considering the move. Israeli sources say the two ambassadors have held secret meetings in the past few months.

US BUDGETARY AID REDUCED BY 50%  
(ION 8 Oct 94, p.7)  
Djibouti's finance minister Ahmed Aden Yussuf and the United States ambassador to Djibouti Martin L. Cheshes signed an agreement on September 28 covering US annual budget assistance for the year 1994-1995. The aid will amount to US$ 1 million (about 177 million Djibouti francs) which is a reduction of around 50 percent compared with the previous year, when Washington gave Djibouti $2 million in budget aid.

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