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African Navies South of the Sahara

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The continuing world recession and the severe drought which has taken place in much of Southern Africa have reduced the funds available for ships and military hardware in sub-Saharan countries. In these countries, the navies are normally the poor relations of the other services and the first to suffer when funds are limited; it is on the armies that most of the regimes' leaders depend to retain their power. An air force is a useful and powerful backup to the army, but navies play little part in the internal power struggles.

The military takeover in Nigeria in the last hours of 1983 demonstrates how fluid the political picture in Africa is today. The economic crisis in one of Africa's most advanced countries caused by falling oil prices returned the army to power after four years of civilian rule. Many African governments may change unless economic conditions ease soon.

The East-West struggle for influence in the African continent continued throughout 1983; the French have probably had the most success in this regard. Their prompt assistance to their erstwhile colonies is well noted and appreciated; it contrasts with the sometimes ambivalent stance of the other Western allies when aid is requested. The Soviet Union has lost some influence during the year, since its promises have not always been carried out, and its economic aid is negligible compared with that provided by the United States, the United Kingdom, and France. In spite of the fierce and continuous condemnation of South Africa by all the members of the Organization of African Unity, many of them depend upon South Africa for their staple food, their income from workers in South Africa, and for a large assortment of goods and services. In most cases, geography and the communication networks make this dependence essential for their survival. This situation will continue in 1984. No country in Africa, including South Africa, could withstand a major assault from any of the great powers. In time of emergency, many of them would have to choose very quickly whether they would prefer to be occupied by Soviet or Soviet-supported forces or by the Western allies. Most of them would today opt for the West unless it appeared likely that the Soviet Union would win a quick victory.

The strategic position of NATO in the South Atlantic has been improved by the British operations to recover the Falkland

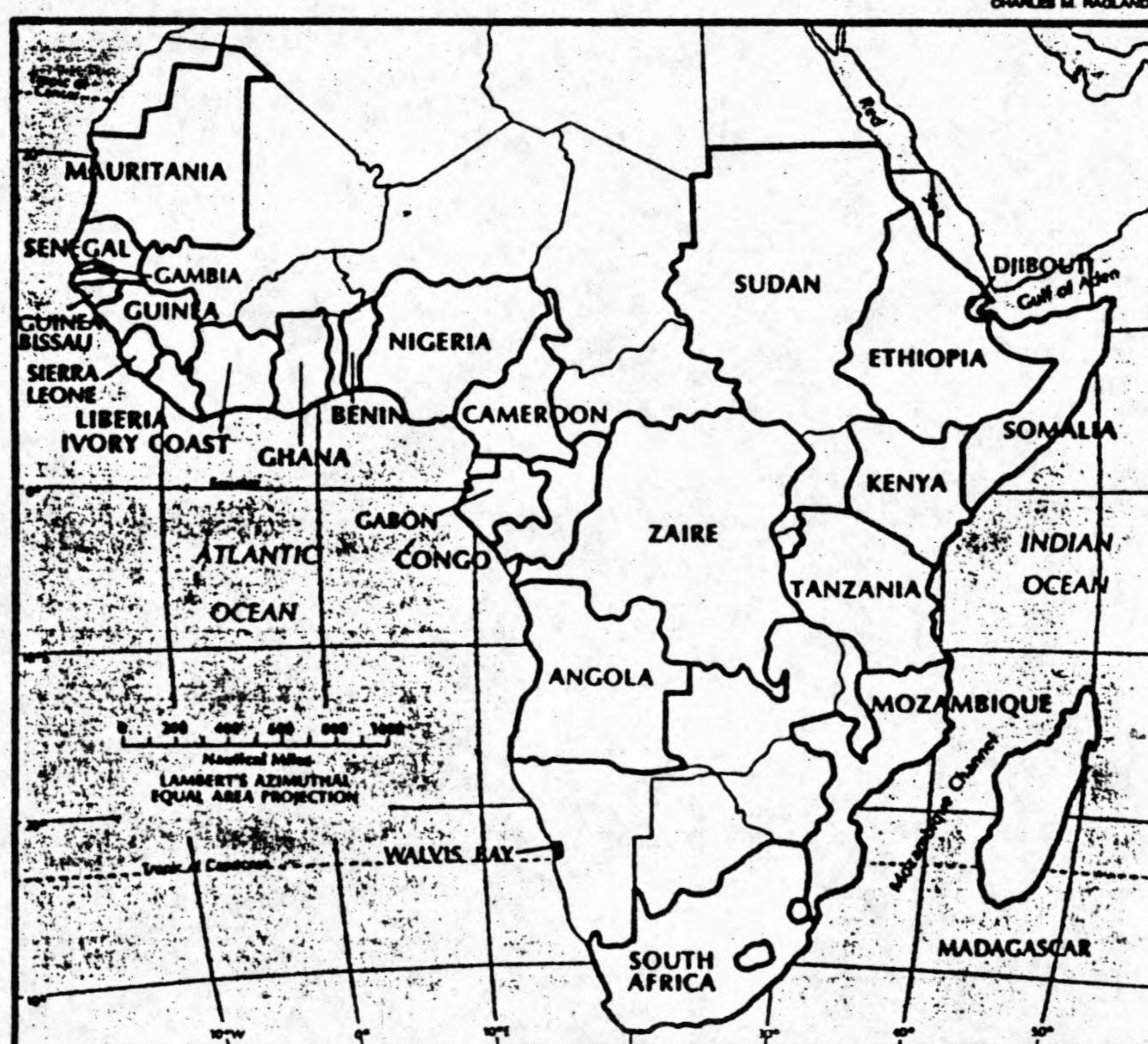
Islands. In 1984, there will continue to be a strong British presence on Ascension Island with its large airfield, as well as on the Falkland Islands. During 1984, the British Government is building an international-sized airfield on East Falkland. This will permit the rapid receipt of reinforcements and would also permit the surveillance of the South Atlantic by long-range maritime patrol and antisubmarine aircraft; the airfield on the Azores is already used by NATO forces. The NATO allies should take note of these advantages and not restrict their operational planning to the geographical limits of the NATO area as laid down in the North Atlantic Treaty. They should now be making contingency plans for joint operations in the African continent to forestall the Soviet Union.

The Soviet Union and its Cuban satraps have gained ground in Ethiopia. The Soviets have considerable influence over the Ethiopian Navy, as well as exclusive use of the naval facilities they have built in the Dahlak Archipelago. Soviet antisubmarine Il-38 "May" aircraft are deployed at Asmara airport and fly patrols over the Red Sea, the Gulf of

Aden, and the Arabian Sea. At the Dahlak base, the Soviet Union has built floating piers, helicopter pads, and barracks, and has provided a floating dry-dock; new navigational aids have improved the usefulness of the facility. About 80 Soviet naval visits to the base are made each year.

In Somalia, the Sudan, and Guinea, the Soviet Union has continued to lose ground; these countries are much more Western-oriented than they were in the 1970s, and the Soviet Union no longer has the use of their ports and facilities. In Somalia, these facilities are now being used from time to time by the U. S. Navy, which has helped restore some order to the Somali Navy, a small force which nearly disintegrated after the Soviet Union switched its support to Ethiopia during the Ogaden War.

Considerable Soviet, Cuban, and East German military assistance and influence continues in Angola. Military aid to Angola has been supplemented by an economic aid agreement for 1982-90. The port of Luanda is the primary logistic and maintenance base for the Soviet Navy's West African patrol flotilla, normally



about five to seven ships. These provide a contingency presence and, in wartime, could do damage to the Western lines of communication before Western forces could be sent to deal with them. Last year, a Soviet task force, led by the new Kiev-class aircraft carrier *Novorossiysk*, visited the port. Soviet Air Force Tu-95 "Bear-Ds" periodically deploy to Luanda, from where they carry out surveillance flights over the South Atlantic. Luanda provides access for the Soviet bloc to the important minerals in Southern Africa and a base from which assistance can be given to pro-Soviet guerrillas fighting on the borders of Namibia (Southwest Africa).

In 1984, it is probable that there will be some movement toward a settlement of the Namibia problem: in 1983, the Secretary General of the United Nations, Javier Perez de Cuellar, visited South Africa, Namibia, and other African countries. He appeared to have more understanding than his predecessor of the position of South Africa; this is basically that independence cannot be granted without the withdrawal of Cuban troops from Angola and without properly conducted free elections in the territory. However, the South African Government is not prepared to discuss the future of the Walvis Bay enclave until a stable government is installed in Namibia. Walvis Bay, an important harbor and minor naval base, has been a part of the Cape Province of South Africa since the British Government annexed it to prevent German occupation prior to World War II. For a time, the Republic of South Africa, for convenience, administered it from Windhoek, but it was never a part of Southwest Africa or of the mandate over that territory granted to South Africa by the League of Nations after World War I. Neither South Africa nor the NATO nations could permit unfriendly forces to make use of this base in wartime; NATO therefore should have an important role to play in any negotiations on the future of Namibia.

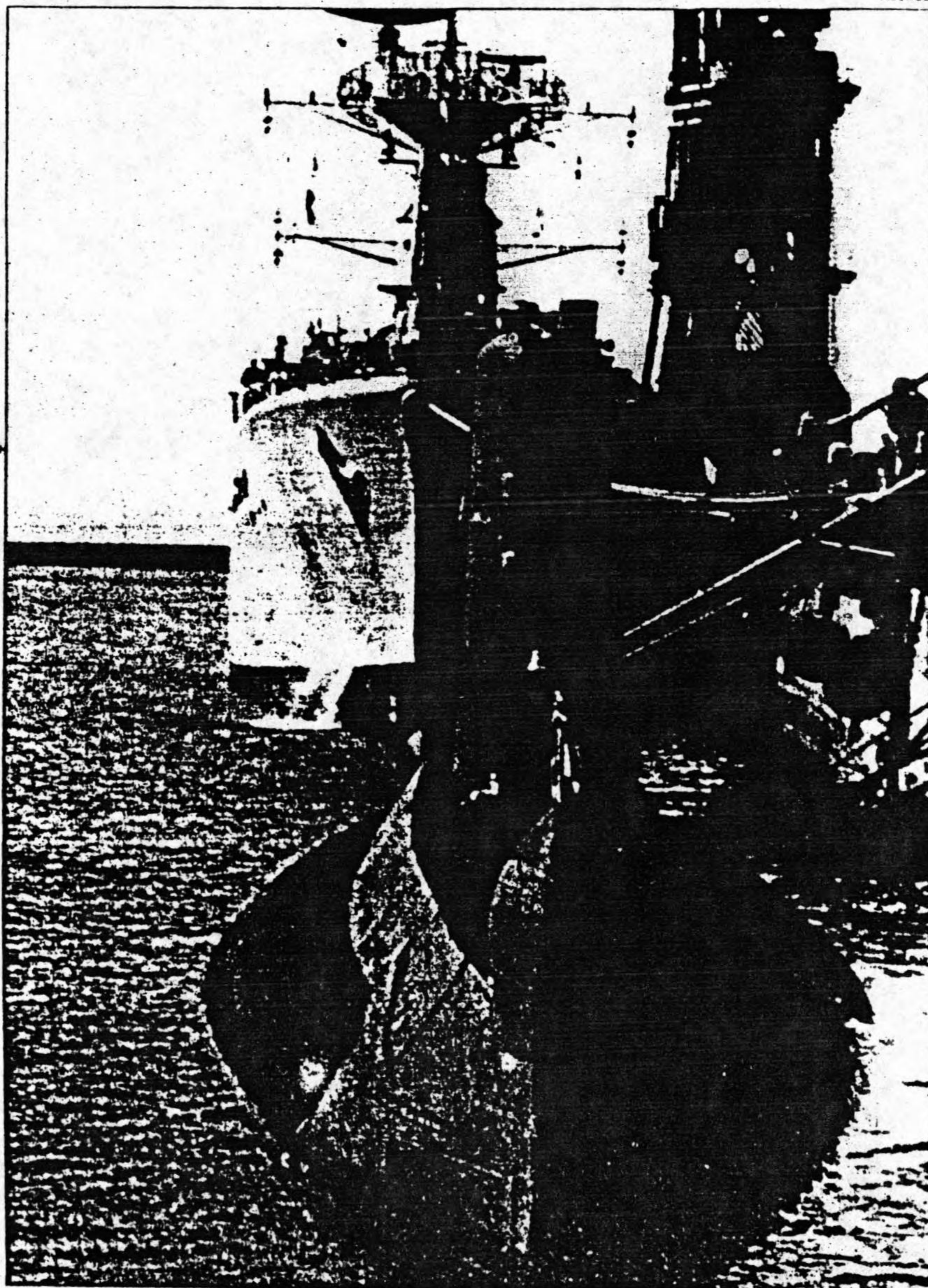
Angola: The Angolan Navy has six Soviet "Osa-II" guided missile patrol boats with four SS-N-2 surface-to-surface missiles each, six Soviet "Shershen", five ex-Portuguese *Argos*-class large pa-

trol craft, plus ten smaller coastal patrol craft and 18 landing ships and craft. The air force has one F-27 Friendship maritime patrol aircraft. The "Osas" could threaten South African ships which might approach their coastline operating against guerrilla forces.

Mozambique: The position of Mozambique at the end of 1983 is more ambivalent than that of Angola. Beset by the activities of the National Resistance of Mozambique, disappointed by the inefficiency of the aid provided by the Soviet Union, and reliant upon South Africa for the successful operation of the port of Maputo, President Samora Machel has toured the Western countries looking for more assistance. Although he has permitted Maputo and Beira to be used by the Soviet Navy, he has not yet allowed the Soviet Union to build or take over perma-

nent facilities there, nor has he turned his country into a Soviet satellite. Mozambique has given some sanctuary and support to members of the Marxist African National Congress in their activities against the Republic of South Africa, but on the whole has kept this involvement on a low key so as not to cause severe retaliation from South Africa. President Machel knows only too well that the economy of his country depends upon trade with South Africa, and a great deal of its foreign currency comes from the wages of Mozambique workers in South Africa. The country's navy has changed little during the past year.

South Africa: The Republic of South Africa has by far the best defense force in Africa, including the navy, and is the economic giant of the continent. Its strategic minerals, ports, harbors, airfields,



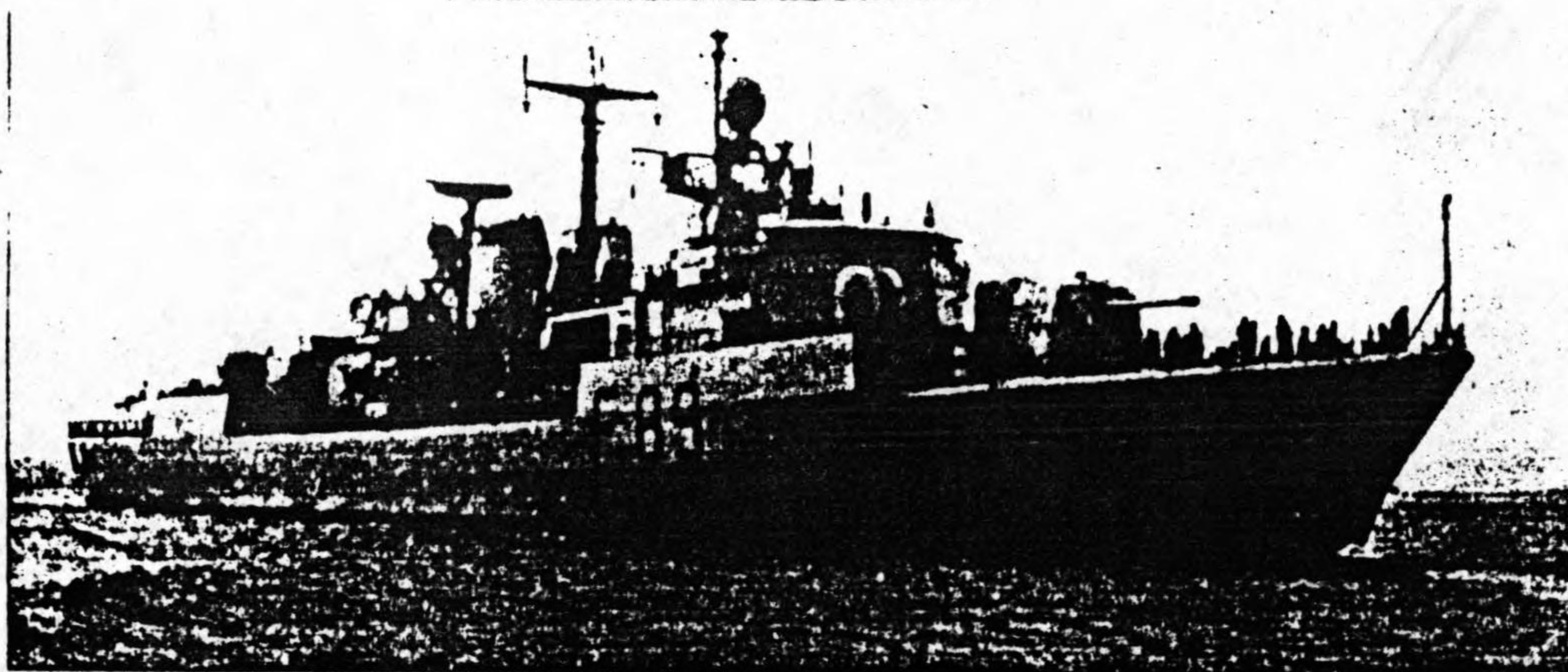
The South African Navy possesses the only submarine force in sub-Saharan Africa. Its three French-built Daphne-class submarines pose a significant threat to any hostile naval force operating in their waters.

communications, and industrial capacity are important to the West in any conflict, and the country remains strongly anti-communist. No doubt, it would not remain neutral in any East-West conflagration, but the South African Government strongly believes that it is wrong for the West to assume their assistance in war when they are shunned by their allies-to-be in peacetime.

It is for this reason that the prime minister has continued to stress that the South African Navy can no longer be relied upon to safeguard the Cape of Good Hope sea route; this, he says, must be the responsibility of the Western powers. As each year passes, the South African Navy will become less able to do this and is steadily, as directed by the government, becoming a force designed for the close protection of the republic's coastline and harbors. There is now only one frigate left. She is equipped for antisubmarine warfare and carries a Wasp helicopter but has no missiles. The three *Daphne*-class submarines purchased in 1969 and 1970 remain operational; one, the *SAS Johanna van der Merwe*, has just completed a major 18-month refit in the Simonstown Naval Dockyard, where there is a submarine lift and a full overhaul facility.

The major new construction program for the South African Navy was announced last year, when it was officially stated that a number of 1,500-ton corvettes were to be constructed—the first hull to be delivered in 1987–88. The ships are to be armed with Gabriel surface-to-surface missiles, Italian Albatros surface-to-air missiles, Oto-Melara 76-mm. guns, antisubmarine warfare weapons, and helicopters. A relatively small crew of 80 per ship is planned.

The strike capability of the South African Navy rests upon the "Minister"-class fast missile boats. The first three of these were built in Israel, while five more have been built in Durban and another four are being built. All are 430-ton, 191-foot-long craft powered by four MTU diesels giving 14,000 shaft horsepower and a speed of 32 knots. The craft have a range of 1,500 nautical miles at 30 knots, or as much as 5,000 nautical miles when nursing the fuel. The complement is 47 and the armament is six Skorpioen (South African-made) surface-to-surface missiles (SSMs) and two 76-mm., two 20-mm., and four 12.7-mm. guns. It is reported that there are three other small fast missile craft each with two Skorpioens and that three Israeli *Dvora*-class fast missile craft have been delivered. The "Minister" class has, for its size, excellent seakeeping capabilities, but in the



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turbulent seas around South Africa these boats can be very uncomfortable and wet, making it difficult for them to stay at sea for any length of time. The Dorbyl and Sandrock Austral Yards in Durban have the capability to build the new corvettes, but it is unlikely that the economic position, partly because of the large sums of money expended on relief work resulting from the drought, will permit the work to go ahead in 1984.

By considerable hard work in Simonstown, the venerable ex-British "Ton"-class vessels remain in service; four are used as minesweepers and two as minehunters. Another four, which have been converted into patrol craft, are also in service to augment the four old ex-British "Ford"-class patrol ships. There is also one fleet replenishment ship, some tugs, and search and rescue launches.

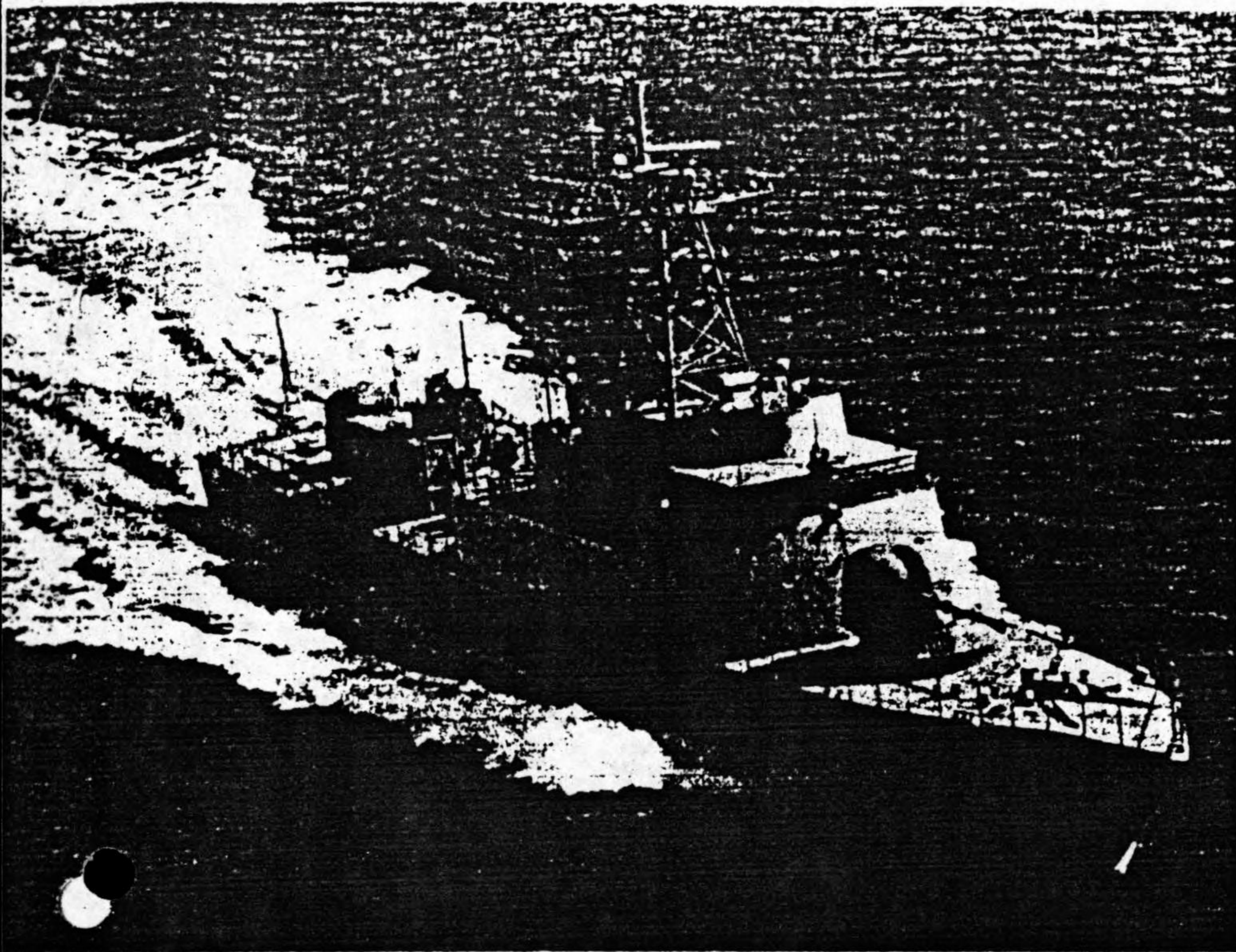
There are now about 25 armed *Namacurra* harbor patrol craft and two hydrographic ships, one being an ocean-going vessel, which does good work as far south as the Prince Edward Islands, where a weather station provides information for worldwide forecasting. The underground and well-equipped maritime headquarters at Silvermine, Cape Peninsula, is one of the stations in the world merchant ship reporting organization, whose headquarters is at Governor's Island, New York. Surveillance of merchant ships and warships, particularly those of the Soviet bloc, is carried out by the five elderly Shackleton long-range aircraft and the 18 shorter-range unarmed Albatross P-166S aircraft of the South African Air Force. Although these movements were once passed to the French and British (and so into the NATO system), the reports have now ceased—at least officially. The South African Navy and Air Force provide search and rescue forces on behalf of world shipping around their coasts and 400 nautical miles outwards, and, because of the lack of any such services in the countries to the north, their forces often have to operate at maximum range, outside their normal operating areas.

The three South African submarines still pose a threat to any aggressor in their area, but the newly programmed cor-

Despite the recent military coup in Nigeria, its navy will likely remain unchanged. The largest ship in the Nigerian Navy is the 3,680-ton "Meko-360H"-class Aradu.

vettes are required if the navy is to have a balanced capability. As the years go by, the navy will also find it more difficult to cooperate with NATO forces. Some contacts remain with Israel, and new ones have been developed with the navies of Chile and Taiwan. The competence of South African naval training establishments and of the dockyard technicians at Simonstown remain at a very high standard, and the naval officers and ratings are the most efficient in Africa. However, the arrest of the commodore in command of the Simonstown Naval Base and his wife on a charge of spying for the Soviets caused extreme consternation in the South African Defense Force.

Nigeria: Although the recent coup has raised doubts about the country's stability, Nigeria is the only sub-Saharan country except South Africa with truly ocean-going ships. These consist of a Blohm and Voss "Meko-360" frigate *Aradu*, commissioned in February 1982 and soon to carry a helicopter; she is armed with eight Otomat SSMs and eight Aspide surface-to-air missiles (SAMs), plus one Oto-Melara 127-mm. gun and eight 40-mm. antiaircraft guns. She also has two triple ASW torpedo tubes and is an effective all-around warship. The other frigate is the *Nigeria*, first commissioned in 1964 but refitted in 1977. She is used for training purposes and has a helicopter platform. The four other major surface ships are corvettes built by Vosper Thornycroft. The two *Erin'mi*-class, 850-ton vessels were delivered in 1980 and have Sea Cat SAMs, one 76-mm. Oto-Melara gun, one 40-mm. Bofors gun, and an ASW rocket launcher. The two other 650-ton corvettes are less sophisticated gun-armed craft. The larger surface ships are backed up by three Lürssen "FPB-57"-class missile boats, with four Otomat missiles each, and three similar



French influence on the navies of its former colonies remains significant. For example, most of the Senegalese Navy's vessels—including the patrol boat Njambur, above—were built in France.

The "P-48"-class L'Audacieux is typical of vessels in the Cameroon Navy—she is small and French-built.

French *La Combattante-IIIB*-class boats, with four Exocet missiles each. The navy also has four Brooke Marine and four Abeking and Rasmussen patrol boats. There are two useful "Type-502"-class LSTs, built in 1979, which can carry 400 tons plus 550 troops on a long voyage, or 1,000 troops for a short voyage; the ships will carry five 40-ton tanks. The 100 coastal and river patrol boats of various types are used by the navy and police and by the new coast guard partly to combat piracy, which was once prevalent among ships lying outside the harbors, but this situation has improved. The police also operate five "Tiger"-class small hovercraft.

The Nigerian Navy also has at least 15 glass-reinforced plastic patrol craft powered by two MTU diesels for a top speed of 33 knots, and a range of 300 nautical miles at 32 knots. Each craft, built by Intermarine of Italy, has one 20-mm. gun and two machine guns. These craft are built by Intermarine of Italy. Two Lynx Mk-86 helicopters for antisubmarine operations are about to be delivered and will

be flown by the newly created fleet air arm.

However, most of the funds available for defense appear to have been spent on the air force, which has two F-27 Friendship maritime patrol aircraft on order, as well as 18 Jaguars, two C-130 transports, 12 Italian MB-339 trainers, and five Chinook helicopters. As elsewhere in Africa, the bulk of the defense funds go to the army, which is being equipped with main battle tanks, light tanks, armored cars, and a wide variety of modern arms. It is hard to see the necessity for all this hardware in Nigeria.

Ghana: Ghana's economy remains extremely fragile, and there are few funds available for the navy; the fleet still has both of its *Kromantse*-class corvettes. The *Kromantse* was built in 1964, and the *Keta* in 1965, both by Vosper Thornycroft in a joint venture with Vickers. They are useful and inexpensive ships which were refitted in 1975, but they do not carry modern missiles and are becoming outdated. They are backed by two Lürssen "FPB-57"-class, 410-ton patrol/search and rescue boats delivered in 1981, carrying one 76-mm. Oto-Melara gun and a 40-mm. Bofors gun, and two "FPB-45" patrol/search and rescue boats, also Lürssen-delivered in 1979-80. These latter boats are 252-ton craft. There are also two ex-British "Ford" class, two German-built patrol boats, and two Fairey Marine Spear Mk-2 small coastal patrol craft.

Senegal and Gambia: These countries signed a Pact of Confederation in 1981, but their armed forces, very small in the case of Gambia, remain separate entities. Gambia has three "Tracker" and one

"Lance" small patrol boats for use in Banjul Harbor, while Senegal has the French-built 451-ton, "PR-72"-class *Njambur*, which could later be fitted with Exocet missiles; this vessel was built in 1981. There are also three French-built "P-48" patrol boats of 250 tons and three "Interceptor"-class, 62-ton patrol boats built by Les Bateaux Turbec in Canada. The air force has one Embraer-111 and one DHC-6-300 in its maritime patrol squadron. The extensive harbor at Dakar, once a famous French naval base, would be important to the allies in wartime; fortunately, Senegal is Western oriented. During the Falklands Conflict, the government permitted some British ships to call there. The French also continue to use the port of Dakar, and during the year, part of their rapid intervention force exercised with the defense forces of Senegal.

Sierra Leone: Sierra Leone is also Western-inclined, and the government allowed the MV *Canberra*, acting as a troopship, to call at Freetown to collect supplies and fuel on her voyage south to take part in the recapture of the Falkland Islands—a decision much appreciated by the British Government. Sierra Leone has only a small coast guard, equipped with one Tracker Mk-2 patrol craft.

Guinea and Guinea-Bissau: Once Soviet clients, these countries are now trying to rebuild relations with the West. Guinea still has six Chinese "Shanghai-II"-class patrol craft, three Soviet "Shershens" without torpedo tubes, two "Poluchats," a French-built 90-foot patrol craft, and a former Soviet "T-58"-class minesweeper converted into a corvette. Guinea-Bissau has a "Shershen" (without torpedo tubes), one "Poluchat," and five small coastal patrol craft. If the Soviet Union ceased to provide spare parts and assistance, the navies of both countries would soon become ineffective. The same applies to the Guinea Air Force, which is equipped with Soviet aircraft.

Congo: Communist-supported, Congo's small navy has one torpedo tubeless "Shershen," three Chinese "Shanghai"-class boats, three Spanish "Pirana"-class and four Chinese "Yulin"-class river patrol craft. The Congo has three Arcoa "Type-43" and two small patrol boats on order. The navy is used to cover the port of Point Noire and to patrol the River Congo.

Gabon: The small country of Gabon has one French-built, wooden-hulled patrol boat armed with four SS-12 wire-guided SSMs, three smaller patrol boats, and one landing craft. The air force operates one Embraer Bandeirante maritime

patrol aircraft, recently purchased from Brazil. The coast guard operating on the River Congo has ten small craft.

Ivory Coast: The Ivory Coast also has some missile-armed boats; these are two French-built, 148-ton *Patras*, (each with six SS-12s), a small landing ship, and 13 small landing craft. These are required for moving troops around the large lagoons and along the coast because of few good roads running east and west from the capital, Abidjan.

Liberia: Having always been supported by the United States, Liberia's airfield at Monrovia is important in Western strategy, as is the harbor there. The United States has supplied two Swiftships 38-ton craft and a 12-ton patrol boat. There are also three 50-ton, Swedish-built coastal patrol craft, delivered in 1980.

Zaire: Zaire concentrates upon patrolling the long Congo River, using a mix-

the country; few funds are available for the navy, but enough have been provided to rearm the four Brooke Marine-built patrol boats with Israeli Gabriel missiles. There are also three Vosper 103-foot patrol boats. Contacts with the Israelis have taken place, and some advisers have helped with Gabriel missile instruction.

Djibouti: Fortunately for the allies, the French still retain a garrison in now-independent Djibouti. The country itself is hemmed in by Ethiopia and Somalia and would soon become a battleground between them if the French were not present. It now provides the West's only presence in the Red Sea.

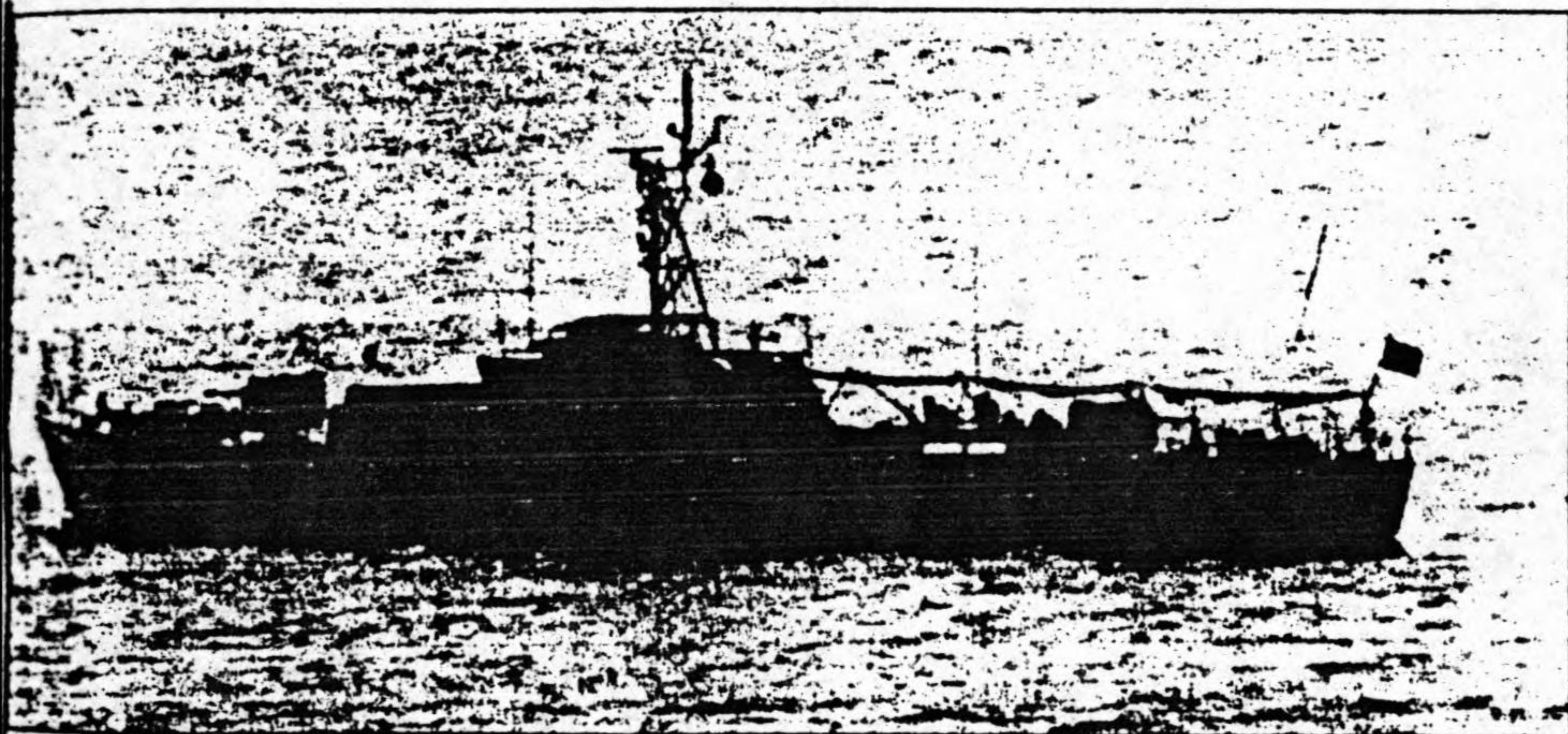
Sudan: The government of Sudan permits Western ships to call at Bur Sudan (Port Sudan), and its relations with Egypt remain good. However, there has been little change in the status of its navy. Sudan operates some patrol craft there and on the River Nile; they are a mixed

came a "democratic socialist," one-party state. However, Tanzania has also become somewhat disenchanted with the Soviet Union and China and has made tentative approaches to the West for economic assistance. Except for the four Vosper Thornycroft 75-foot patrol boats at Zanzibar and two West German-supplied 40-ton patrol boats, Tanzania's ships were all supplied by the Soviet Union, East Germany, North Korea, and China. The principal vessels are Chinese "Shanghai-II" patrol boats, four Chinese "Huchuan" hydrofoils, and three East German "P-6s" without torpedoes. There are about nine small patrol craft, including "Yulins," and "Poluchats." Four Chinese-supplied "Yulin"-class boats are on Lake Victoria Nyanza. But without continuing Chinese or Soviet assistance, the Tanzanian Navy has become ineffective as an operational force.

Madagascar: A former French colony, Madagascar has a fine harbor at Diego Suarez, which would be an asset to either the Warsaw Pact or NATO navies. The government is introspective and has succeeded in remaining reasonably nonaligned. The small navy of about 600, including 150 marines, has one French-built "PR-48"-class large patrol boat, four North Korean-built patrol boats, and a French-funded, locally built *Batram*-class 810-ton landing ship, which can carry 250 tons of stores or 120 troops. These are useful for transporting troops around the island, which, like many other African countries, has poor road communications and only two short railway lines. A small maritime police force operates five 20-year-old craft built in West Germany.

Mauritius and the Seychelles: The Soviets have lost influence in the islands of Mauritius and the Seychelles; the Seychelles Government is now permitting the warships of NATO allies to call without requiring them to guarantee they do not have nuclear armaments on board. Mauritius has taken a more pro-Western stance recently and hopes for aid from the West. The Seychelles have two "Zhuk" large patrol craft, one *Sirius*-class former minesweeper, one 136-foot patrol craft, and a small 855-ton landing ship. Mauritius has only an ex-Indian patrol craft and a few launches. These islands, with the small French presence in the Cormoran Islands and the U. S. base on Diego Garcia, could all be very important in any battle for the Indian Ocean and the control of sea routes around Africa.

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ture of gun-armed "Shanghai," U. S., and other patrol craft—in all about 50 small vessels, many of which are inoperable for lack of spare parts and proper maintenance.

Cameroon: With its bases at Doula and Port Gentil, Cameroon has provided its navy with a strike capability by the purchase of a French "P-48S"-class patrol boat, armed with eight MM-40 Exocet SSMs. Cameroon already has one other such craft. Its other craft are two "Shanghai IIs," three coastal patrol craft, and 12 small landing and assault craft. The air force now has two Dornier 128-6 maritime patrol aircraft.

Kenya: The work on deepening the harbor channel at Mombasa, Kenya, has been completed, using funds from the United States. The small Kenyan Navy must have benefited from contacts with the United States and Royal Navy ships, which now visit the port regularly. The government has recovered from the failed air force *coup d'etat* and is in control of

bag of Yugoslavian-, West German-, and U. S.-built light craft.

Ethiopia: Soviet Union has supplied a "Petya"-class corvette to Ethiopia. This East African navy also has four "Osa-II" guided missile patrol boats, armed with four SS-N-2 missiles each. There are four 105-foot Swiftships patrol craft, four U. S.-built patrol boats, and one ex-Yugoslavian craft; most of these are old and probably are no longer effective warships. The Soviet Union, Cuba, and East Germany have at least 12,500 advisers and technicians in Ethiopia.

Somalia: The navy of Somalia has deteriorated. Few of its landing craft are unlikely to be serviceable, because of the lack of spares. Somalia must protect the three ports of Berbera, Mogadishu, and Kismayu. Mogadishu has a potentially useful facility which was built by the Soviet Union.

Tanzania: After independence, Tanzania—like many of its African neighbors—looked to the East for assistance and be-