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NEW DELHI

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(3) ORIGIN: AMB-1 INFO DCM POL
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S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 02 NEW DELHI 03390

CLASS: SECRET
CHRG: POL 2/8/88 #207
APPRV: AMB: JGDEAN
DRFTD: POL: GFSHERMAN
CLEAR: DCM: GLSTREEB
DISTR: EXDI
ORGIN: WNG ID: 02374 GE

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DOS REVIEWED 18-Apr-2007: DECLASSIFIED IN FULL

FOR UNDERSECRETARY ARMACOST FROM AMBASSADOR

DEPT PASS WHITE HOUSE FOR NSC

E.O. L2356: DECL:OADR
TAGS: PREL, IN, US, AF
SUBJECT: INDIAN HANDLING OF AFGHANISTAN

REF: (A) STATE 3628L; (B) NEW DELHI 2915; (C)
ISLAMABAD 2482; (D) NEW DELHI 2865

1. S - ENTIRE TEXT

2. THIS IS AN ACTION MESSAGE. SEE PARAS 9 AND 10.

3. I WANT TO REGISTER AGAIN THE CONCERN I AM HEARING
HERE STEMMING FROM THE PRIME MINISTER'S PERCEPTION
THAT THE UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT RESENTS INCREASED
INDIAN ACTIVISM ON THE AFGHANISTAN ISSUE. GANDHI'S
KEY ADVISOR, RONEN SEN, CAME BACK TO THE SUBJECT
SEVERAL TIMES DURING MY TWO CONVERSATIONS WITH HIM
FEB. 8 AND 9 ABOUT VORONTSOV'S TALKS HERE AND THE NEW
INITIATIVE ANNOUNCED IN MOSCOW LAST EVENING BY
GORBACHEV. SEN INDICATED THAT THE PRIME MINISTER
BELIEVES HIS INVOLVEMENT IN PAST MONTHS HAS HELPED
WITH GORBACHEV'S DECISION TO GO FORWARD WITH AN EARLY
WITHDRAWAL OF SOVIET FORCES WITHIN A SET TIME-FRAME,
FRONT LOADING THAT EXIT DURING THE EARLY PHASE. BOTH
GANDHI AND SEN ARE OBVIOUSLY INTERPRETING GORBACHEV'S
EARLY SPECIAL NOTIFICATION TO GANDHI OF HIS
ANNOUNCEMENT AS EVIDENCE OF THE IMPORTANCE THE SOVIETS
GIVE TO THIS INDIAN ROLE. WITHOUT ANY HESITATION THE
PRIME MINISTER IMMEDIATELY CONVEYED THE SOVIET
INFORMATION TO THE PRESIDENT IN THE PERSONAL LETTER
WHICH SEN GAVE ME YESTERDAY (SEPTELS). THE INDIAN
SIDE MADE NO BONES ABOUT THEIR FEELING THAT THEY WERE
TIPPING US OFF IN ADVANCE ABOUT THIS MAJOR SOVIET MOVE.

4. WHETHER THIS GANDHI PERCEPTION IS
EXAGGERATED--WHICH IT MAY BE--IS NOT REALLY THE
POINT. THE FACT IS INDIA IS A PLAYER IN THE UNFOLDING
AFGHANISTAN DRAMA--PERHAPS A MINOR PLAYER, BUT
NEVERTHELESS A PLAYER. THE SOVIETS APPEAR TO SUPPORT
THAT ROLE--WITNESS THE EARLY NOTICE TO GANDHI; UNTIL

RECENTLY, GANDHI WAS UNDER THE IMPRESSION THAT WE WANTED HIM INVOLVED AS WELL.

5. AGAINST THIS BACKDROP THE RECENT ENCOUNTERS WITH AMBASSADOR KAUL IN THE DEPARTMENT APPEAR ALL THE MORE INCOMPREHENSIBLE HERE (SEE REF A). AT A MEETING WITH THE PRESIDENT IN WASHINGTON IN OCTOBER, GANDHI WAS URGED TO BECOME MORE ACTIVE IN PROVIDING VIEWS ON THE AFGHANISTAN SITUATION; IN HIS MEETING LAST WEEK WITH SFRC STAFF MEMBER PETER GALBRAITH, IN KAUL'S MEETING IN THE DEPARTMENT FEB. 2, AND IN SEN'S SEVERAL CONVERSATIONS WITH ME HERE, THIS POINT WAS STRESSED. GANDHI BELIEVES THAT HIS INVOLVEMENT IS WHAT THE PRESIDENT ASKED OF HIM. AS SEN POINTED OUT TO ME, NOW THE WARNINGS TO KAUL AGAINST INDIAN CONDUCT OF ITS CONTACTS HAVE BEGUN TO MAKE THE PRIME MINISTER THINK THAT ADMINISTRATION SIGNALS HAVE BEEN SWITCHED; INSTEAD OF WELCOMING THE EFFORT TO ESTABLISH WHAT IS GOING ON IN AFGHANISTAN, THE U.S. GOVERNMENT SEEMS TO RESENT IT. SEN, OBVIOUSLY REFLECTING THE PRIME MINISTER'S WORRY, SAID THAT THIS SWITCH IS IN DANGER OF ERODING THE GOOD WILL AND GREATER SENSE OF COOPERATION ENGENDERED BY GANDHI'S TALKS IN WASHINGTON.

6. IN MY VIEW THE QUESTION IS NOT WHETHER THE INDIANS ARE TO BE INVOLVED; THEY ARE INVOLVED ALREADY, AS SEN TOLD ME EARLIER, BECAUSE THEY CONSIDER WHAT HAPPENS IN AFGANISTAN A MAJOR NATIONAL INTEREST. THE QUESTION IS THEREFORE WHETHER THIS INVOLVEMENT CAN BE UTILIZED TO PROMOTE OUR POLICY OR WHETHER A SITUATION IS ALLOWED TO DEVELOP WHERE THE PRIME MINISTER BELIEVES WE ARE TRYING TO UNDERMINE HIS EFFORTS. AS I POINTED OUT IN MY EARLIER MESSAGE ON THIS SUBJECT (REF B), IF THE PRIME MINISTER'S GROWING PERCEPTION THAT WE DO NOT APPRECIATE HIS ACTIVISM BECOMES A CONVICTION ON HIS PART, THE RESULTING DISTRUST AND SUSPICIONS WILL UNDERMINE THE MUTUAL CONFIDENCE WE HAVE BEEN WORKING HARD TO BUILD IN OUR OVERALL RELATIONSHIP.

7. UNFORTUNATELY THE VIEWS IN REF B SEEM TO HAVE ARRIVED TOO LATE TO BE TAKEN INTO CONSIDERATION IN THE HURRIED DEMARCHE TO KAUL ON THE SCHEDULED MEETING IN ROME FEB. 5 BETWEEN NATWAR SINGH AND FORMER KING ZAHIR SHAH. I AM REPEATING THOSE VIEWS IN ESSENCE IN THIS

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MESSAGE. IN THE EVENT, OUR WARNING THE INDIANS ABOUT THE ROME MEETING DID NOT EITHER PREVENT THE GET-TOGETHER OR CONTRIBUTE TO THE COOPERATION WE SEEK FROM INDIA ON AFGHANISTAN.

8. ONE SUBSTANTIVE POINT IN THE BRIEF FOR THE FEB. 3 MEETING WITH KAUL (REF A) IS AN EXAMPLE OF HOW THE INDIANS COULD WELL BE CONFUSED OVER OUR ATTITUDE TOWARD THEIR CONTACTS. IT WAS THE POINT THAT A MEETING TENTATIVELY SET BETWEEN CORDOVEZ AND THE AFGHAN RESISTANCE LEADERSHIP SOMEHOW APPEARED TO HAVE FALLEN THROUGH BECAUSE OF ADVERSE REACTION OF THE ALLIANCE LEADERSHIP TO THE COMING SINGH/ZAHIR SHAH MEETING. FROM WHAT WE HAVE SEEN, WE CANNOT UNDERSTAND WHAT TIE EXISTS BETWEEN CORDOVEZ' MEETINGS WITH THE ALLIANCE LEADERSHIP AND THE ROME MEETING. (NOTE. SINCE THE NATWAR SINGH-ZAHIR SHAH MEETING TOOK PLACE ON FEB. 5 AND, ACCORDING TO PRESS REPORTS, CARDOVEZ MET WITH THE RESISTANCE LEADERSHIP ON FEB. 6, I AM ALL THE MORE PUZZLED ABOUT THE SUPPOSED LINKAGE. END NOTE)

9. I BELIEVE THAT OUR ACTIONS WITH INDIA SHOULD NOW BE DIRECTED TOWARD TWO ENDS: REASSURING GANDHI THAT WE DESIRE TO MAINTAIN CLOSEST CONTACT WITH HIM ABOUT HIS AND OUR VIEWS OF THE EVOLVING AFGHANISTAN SITUATION, AND, SECOND, CONTINUE URGING THE PRIME MINISTER TO BE IN DIRECT AND FREQUENT CONTACT WITH PAKISTAN ON WHAT INDIA IS DOING. AS GANDHI NOTED IN HIS LETTER TO THE PRESIDENT, INDIA HAS LIMITED ITS INVOLVEMENT SO FAR TO FACT-FINDING AND FRANKLY HAS COME UP WITH NOTHING CONCRETE TO OFFER ON A POSSIBLE SETTLEMENT. IT SEEMS TO ME THAT NOTHING EXISTS IN THIS APPROACH WITH WHICH WE NEED FIND FAULT. A BIG STEP IN REASSURING GANDHI ON THAT SCORE WOULD BE A SWIFT AND UNDERSTANDING PRESIDENTIAL LETTER BACK TO GANDHI, THANKING HIM FOR HIS INFORMATION ON INDIAN FINDINGS AND FOR THE ADVANCED WORD ON GORBACHEV'S COMING ANNOUNCEMENT. REGARDING THE SECOND POINT, PAKISTAN, AS RELAYED IN NEW DELHI 3247 RONEN SEN HAS ALREADY HAD A BRIEF TALK WITH THE PAKISTAN AMBASSADOR HERE FEB. 4 ABOUT EXACTLY WHICH CONTACTS INDIA HAS HAD AND THEIR OVERALL RESULT. I INTEND TO KEEP REMINDING THE INDIANS THAT THESE EXCHANGES SHOULD CONTINUE, SO--AT LEAST IN WORD--PAKISTAN WILL HAVE REASSURANCE ABOUT INDIAN CONTACTS. WHILE NOT EXPECTING THAT INDIAN ASSURANCES WILL END SUSPICIONS OR LEAD TO AGREEMENT BETWEEN INDIA AND PAKISTAN ON THE HIGHLY COMPLICATED AND PROBLEMATIC AFGHANISTAN SITUATION, I STILL RECOMMEND THAT IN OUR CONTACTS WITH BOTH SIDES--IN WASHINGTON, ISLAMABAD, AND HERE--WE PUSH FOR MAXIMUM COMMUNICATION BETWEEN THE TWO.

10. ACTION REQUESTED. GIVEN THE IMPORTANCE OF THIS ISSUE TO RAJIV GANDHI'S PERSONAL RELATIONSHIP WITH THE PRESIDENT AND VICE PRESIDENT, I RECOMMEND THAT AN ANSWER FROM THE PRESIDENT TO THE PM'S LETTER BE SENT QUICKLY, TAKING THE LINE ON RAJIV'S ACTIONS WHICH I HAVE SUGGESTED IN PARA ABOVE.

DEAN

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