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FM AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 1761
INFO AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD
CINCPAC

~~S E C R E T~~ SECTION 1 OF 2 NEW DELHI 7179

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: MCAP, IN
SUBJECT: INDIAN NUCLEAR CAPABILITY AND INTENTIONS

REF: STATE 112408

1. WE THINK SNIE-31-72 (AUGUST 3, 1972) ON THIS SAME SUBJECT LOOKS VERY GOOD IN RETROSPECT IN EVALUATING INDIAN INTENTIONS. WE SHARE THAT ESTIMATE'S JUDGMENT THAT THE INDIANS WILL NOT GO FOR A CRASH PROGRAM TO DEVELOP A DELIVERY SYSTEM. THEY WILL PROBABLY CONTINUE TO CARRY ON ROCKET AND REENTRY R&D AND WILL HOPE IN FACT TO HAVE SOME LIMITED DELIVERY CAPABILITY BY THE END OF THE DECADE. AT THE SAME TIME, THE INDIANS WILL PROBABLY CONTINUE TO WORK ON REDUCING THE SIZE AND IMPROVING THE EFFICIENCY OF THEIR NUCLEAR DEVICES AND WILL STOCKPILE A LIMITED NUMBER OF THESE SO THEY CAN BE USED FOR EITHER PEACEFUL OR MILITARY PURPOSES.

2. DOMESTIC ECONOMIC RESTRAINTS ON CONTINUING A LIMITED TESTING PROGRAM WITH FISSION DEVICES ARE MINIMAL, GIVEN THE COST ESTIMATES IN THE EARLIER SNIE. WE HAVE NO REASON TO CHALLENGE THESE, AND THERE IS SOME EVIDENCE THE COST

MAY HAVE BEEN CLOSER TO THE LOWE ($10 MILLION) RANGE THAN THE UPPER ($20 MILLION). COST FOR A CRASH MISSILE PROGRAM WOULD BE EXORBITANT AND PROBABLY POLITICALLY NOT FEASIBLE FOR THE INDIAN GOVERNMENT AT THIS TIME. NO URGENT DECISIONS ON THIS, HOWEVER, ARE LIKELY TO BE PLACED BEFORE MRS. GANDHI IN THE NEXT COUPLE OF YEARS. OVER A PERIOD A A DECADE, AN R&R PROGRAM LEADING TOWARD A LIMITED BALLISTIC MISSILE CAPABILITY WOULD BE POSSIBLE AND IS PROBABLY IN VIEW. IT WILL ALMOST CERTAINLY BE DESCRIBED IN TERMS OF PEACEFUL SPACE EXPLORATION. THE INDIAN ARGUMENTS FOR TESTING A FISSION DEVICE (TECHNOLOGICAL, ECONOMIC, NATIONAL PRIDE) APPLY EQUALLY TO DEVELOPING FUSION TECHNOLOGY AS WELL. WE ASSUME THE INDIANS ARE INTERESTED. WE HAVE NO BASIS FOR MAKING A JUDGMENT HERE AS TO WHETHER THE COSTS ARE WITHIN THEIR KEN AND WHETHER THEY ARE WORKING IN THIS DIRECTION.

3. GIVEN THE REPEATED, PUBLIC AND UNQUIVOCAL DECLARATIONS BY INDIAN OFFICIALS FROM THE PRIME MINISTER DOWN THAT INDIA WILL NOT DEVELOP NUCLEAR WEAPONS, WE WOULD EXPECT THAT THE INDIANS WILL CONTINUE PUBLICLY TO INSIST THAT ALL RESEARCH--BOTH BALLISTIC AND NUCLEAR--IS PEACEFUL. THE INDIAN MILITARY ALMOST CERTAINLY WANTS THE OPTION OF USING NUCLEAR DEVICES FOR MILITARY PURPOSES TO BE LEFT OPEN. WE BELIEVE THAT THE MILITARY HAS ARGUED STRONGLY THAT THE DEVICES MUST BE DESIGNED FOR MULTIPLE USE AND, ON BALANCE, THAT MRS. GANDHI WILL AGREE OR HAS ALREADY AGREED TO THIS.

4. THE DOMESTIC POLITICAL DIFFICULTIES OF JUSTIFYING A SHIFT IN POLICY TO ALLOW FOR NUCLEAR WEAPONS WOULD NOT BE INSURMOUNTABLE FOR MRS. GANDHI NOR ANY OTHER INDIAN POLITICAL LEADER. SEVERAL INDIANS HAVE CITED AN ALLEGED REMARK BY MAO TO A FOREIGN

VISITOR THAT, ONCE THE CHINESE HAD HALF-A-DOZEN ATOMIC BOMBS, THEY FELT THEIR SECURITY VIS-A-VIS THE SOVIETS WAS SECURE. SOME INDIANS ARE FEARFUL THAT AT SOME POINT IN THE NEXT FIVE TO TEN YEARS CHINA AND THE SOVIET UNION WILL MEND THEIR FENCES AT LEAST PARTIALLY. AT THAT POINT, THEY ARGUE, SOVIET ASSURANCES TO INDIA WILL LOSE MUCH OF THEIR CURRENT FORCE. ANTICIPATING THAT TIME, INDIA MUST PREPARE ITS OWN STRATEGIC DEFENSE, EVEN IF IT IS ONLY A LIMITED ONE. WHILE THIS VIEW IS MORE PREVALENT AMONG RIGHT-WING INDIANS (JANA SANGH) THAN THE GENERAL INTELLECTUAL PUBLIC WHICH THINKS OF SUCH MATTERS, WE BELIEVE

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IT ALSO HAS CREDIBILITY AMONG THE INDIAN MILITARY, PARTICULARLY THE AIR FORCE, AND AN INFLUENTIAL SCATTERING OF CIVILIANS AS WELL.

5. WE HAVE ENCOUNTERED TO NO INDIANS, HOWEVER, WHO HAVE MENTIONED AN ICBM CAPABILITY EVEN AT THE FRINGE OF INDIAN INTERESTS. AN ICBM CAPABILITY WOULD PROVIDE AN INDIAN CAPABILITY WITHIN THE INDIAN OCEAN AREA AND UP TO CHINESE POPULATION AND INDUSTRIAL CENTERS WHICH, WE BELIEVE, WOULD MEET ANY OF INDIA'S FORESEEABLE STRATEGIC NEEDS. WE DO NOT BELIEVE INDIANS CONSIDER A NUCLEAR MISSILE CAPABILITY AS NECESSARY IN TERMS OF ANY CONCEIVABLE THREAT FROM PAKISTAN, NOR FOR THAT MATTER DO WE BELIEVE THAT NUCLEAR WEAPONS WOULD BE USED IN ALMOST ANY CONTINGENCY AGAINST WHAT IS, IN EFFECT, A SISTER POPULATION.

6. WE BELIEVE THE INDIANS EXPECTED CRITICISM BUT NO EFFECTIVE RETALIATION BY FOREIGN GOVERNMENTS AS A RESULT OF THE MAY 18 TEST. THEY HAVE BEEN SHAKEN SOMEWHAT BY THE REACTIONS THUS FAR. BUT FOREIGN PRESSURE CAN STRENGTHEN THE GOVERNMENT POLITICALLY EVEN WHILE IT POSES POTENTIAL ECONOMIC RISKS. MOREOVER, AT THIS POINT THE INDIANS DO NOT BELIEVE INTERNATIONAL OPPOSITION WILL BE SO GENERAL AS GRAVELY TO IMPAIR FOREIGN AID TO INDIA. NON-ALIGNED REACTION HAS BEEN MIXED, AND INDIA IS WORKING HARD TO RALLY SUPPORT FOR ITSELF AMONG THIS GROUP. THE ARGUMENT THAT THE "GREAT POWERS" OR THE "HAVES" ARE ATTEMPTING TO PUNISH INDIA, AS WELL AS THE OFFER OF GREATER INDIAN COOPERATION IN NUCLEAR DEVELOPMENT TO NON-ALIGNED STATES, WOULD, THE INDIANS ASSUME, WEIGH INFLUENTIALLY IN
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DIN NR A COUNTERFIRE FRON THIS GROUP TO LESTERN AND JAPANESE PRESSURES. ON BALANCE, WE BELIEVE SNIE-31-72'S JUDGMENT THAT FOREIGN REACTION WILL NOT BE DECISIVE IN AFFECTING INDIAN DECISIONS ON ITS NUCLEAR DEVELOPMENT CONTINUES TO BE VALID.

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ACTION INR-10

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TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 1762
INFO AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD
CINCPAC

~~S E C R E T~~ SECTION 2 OF 2 NEW DELHI 7179

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

7. NEVERTHELESS, FOR REASONS OF PRESTIGE, TO UNDERLINE INDIA'S DIFFERENCE FROM OTHER NUCLEAR STATES, AND TO DEFLECT EXTERNAL PRESSURE, MRS. GANDHI MIGHT OFFER TO OPEN UP INDIA'S NUCLEAR PROGRAM TO OUTSIDE INSPECTION IN SUCH A WAY AS TO LIMIT OR EVEN PRECLUDE THE NUCLEAR WEAPONS OPTION. WE THINK THIS IS UNLIKELY BUT POSSIBLE. SOME POSSIBLE HINTS THAT AT LEAST THOUGHT IS BEING GIVEN TO THE OPTION: THE INDIAN PRESS MAY 30 CARRIED REPORTS (OBVIOUSLY GOVERNMENT-INSPIRED) THAT THE INDIAN AEC DOES NOT PRODUCE ENOUGH PLUTONIUM TO CARRY OUT MANY TESTS WITHOUT SERIOUSLY JEOPARDIZING THE INDIAN FAST BREEDER REACTOR PROGRAM; A FOREIGN MINISTRY OFFICIAL'S REMARK THAT INDIA MIGHT BE WILLING TO PROVIDE FIRM AND CONVINCING ASSURANCES TO PAKISTAN THAT INDIA WAS NOT DEVELOPING NUCLEAR WEAPONS; AND MRS. GANDHI'S INSISTENCE TO A NEWSWEEK CORRESPONDENT THAT INDIA INTENDS TO BE A DIFFERENT KIND OF NUCLEAR STATE THAN THE OTHERS AND TO CLEARLY DIFFERENTIATE ITSELF FROM THE WEAPONS STATES. WE DO NOT WISH TO OVERDRAW ANY OF THESE. MRS. GANDHI IS NOT A LADY WHO LIKES TO FORECLOSE HER OPTIONS PRIVATELY EVEN THOUGH SHE MAY APPEAR TO DO SO IN PUBLIC.

8. THE INDIANS ARE CAPABLE OF HELPING THIRD COUNTRIES TO DEVELOP AND TEST WEAPONS, AND WE ARE UNABLE TO OFFER ANY CONVINCING
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ARGUMENTS THAT THEY WILL NOT DO SO IF OFFERED THE RIGHT INCENTIVES OR SUBJECTED TO THE WRONG PRESSURES. THE INDIANS HAVE

BEEN TRYING TO BUILD AN EXPORT MARKET FOR SOME OF THEIR NUCLEAR-RELATED PRODUCTS IN THE LAST YEAR OR TWO, AND WE BELIEVE THEY WILL TRY TO EXPAND THEIR SALES--USING THEIR TEST AS EVIDENCE OF THEIR PROWESS--IN THE FUTURE. THERE WILL BE MORE THAN ONE NON-ALIGNED STATE, AND SOME VERY WEALTHY ONES, WHICH MAY WELCOME THE POSSIBILITY OF DEALING WITH A POOR COUNTRY ON THE QUESTION OF NUCLEAR ENERGY, OR NUCLEAR WEAPONS. INDIA THUS BECOMES A NEW OPTION FOR NON--ALIGNED STATES (IN ADDITION TO THAT ALREADY OFFERED BY FRANCE) IN CONSIDERING THE POSSIBILITY AND COSTS OF "GOING NUCLEAR". IN ORDER TO TAKE ADVANTAGE OF THE BENEFITS OF THIS FOR THEIR INFLUENCE AND POWER, THE INDIANS HAVE TO BE WILLING TO "DEAL." WE ASSUME THIS POTENTIAL BENEFIT HAS BEEN POINTED OUT TO MRS. GANDHI (OR WILL BE) AND THAT THIS REPRESENTS ANOTHER DISINCENTIVE FOR CHECK AGAINST INDIAN LIMITATION OF ITS NUCLEAR OPTIONS. MOYNIHAN

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