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E.O. 11652: XGDS-1,2,3

TAGS: PARM, GW, ST

SUBJECT: SOUTH AFRICAN NUCLEAR TEST SITE

1. YOU SHOULD APPROACH FRG AT APPROPRIATE HIGH LEVEL AND CONVEY FOLLOWING ON EXTREMELY CONFIDENTIAL BASIS:
2. U.S INTELLIGENCE INFORMATION CONFIRMS THE EXISTENCE IN THE KALAHARI DESERT, AS RECENTLY CLAIMED BY THE USSR, OF A FACILITY WHICH APPEARS TO HAVE MANY OF THE ESSENTIAL CHARACTERISTICS OF AN UNDERGROUND NUCLEAR TEST SITE. WE

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ARE UNABLE TO CONCLUDE DEFINITELY THAT THIS FACILITY IS INDEED SUCH A SITE BUT ON THE BASIS OF OUR PRESENT INFORMATION, WE BELIEVE THAT THE SOVIET ALLEGATIONS MUST BE TAKEN WITH THE UTMOST SERIOUSNESS. OUR INFORMATION DOES NOT SUGGEST, HOWEVER, THAT AN ACTUAL TEST IS IMMINENT.

3. THE U.S. HAS APPROACHED THE SOUTH AFRICAN GOVERNMENT TO EXPRESS OUR SERIOUS CONCERN AND TO REQUEST CLARIFICATION OF SOUTH AFRICAN INTENTIONS; THEIR INITIAL RESPONSE ASSERTED SIMPLY THAT SOUTH AFRICA'S NUCLEAR PROGRAM WAS DEVOTED SOLELY TO "PEACEFUL PURPOSES" -- A POSITION REMINISCENT OF INDIA'S POSITION IN CONNECTION WITH ITS 1974 NUCLEAR TEST. WE UNDERSTAND THAT BOTHA USED A SIMILAR FORMULATION IN RESPONDING TO YOUR DEMARCHE ON THIS QUESTION.

4. WE ARE PLANNING FURTHER STEPS TO FORESTALL AN ACTUAL TEST AND TO INHIBIT A SOUTH AFRICAN WEAPONS PROGRAM, AND WILL BE IN TOUCH WITH YOU FURTHER ON THIS MATTER. AT THE VERY LEAST, THIS WILL INVOLVE INFORMING THE SAG THAT WE HAVE REASON, INDEPENDENT OF SOVIET ALLEGATIONS, TO QUESTION EARLIER ASSURANCES CONCERNING THE KALAHARI FACILITY, THAT A NUCLEAR TEST OR MOVEMENT TOWARD A TEST COULD HAVE GRAVE CONSEQUENCES FOR OUR BILATERAL RELATIONSHIP, AND THAT SOUTH AFRICA WILL HAVE TO DEMONSTRATE UNEQUIVOCALLY THE NON-EXPLOSIVES CHARACTER OF ITS NUCLEAR PROGRAM IN ORDER TO AVOID POSSIBILITY OF SERIOUS CONFRONTATION.

5. IN THE MEANTIME, WE ARE CONCERNED THAT SOVIETS, WHILE PROBABLY GENUINELY CONCERNED ABOUT SOUTH AFRICAN INTENTIONS, WILL CONTINUE ATTEMPT TO EXPLOIT SITUATION FOR POLITICAL PURPOSES AT UNITED NATIONS, AT UPCOMING LAGOS

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CONFERENCE, AND ELSEWHERE. THEY HAVE PUBLICLY ACCUSED THE US, NATO, AND ISRAEL OF CULPABILITY IN THIS MATTER.

6. WE ARE AWARE OF PUBLICITY DIRECTED TO FRG'S PAST RELATIONSHIP TO SOUTH AFRICA'S RESEARCH ON URANIUM ENRICHMENT. WE BELIEVE IT IMPORTANT TO AVOID PLAYING INTO HANDS OF SOVIETS AND OTHER CRITICS ON THIS ISSUE, AND TO TAKE WHATEVER STEPS MAY BE POSSIBLE TO DISASSOCIATE WESTERN SUPPLIER NATIONS FROM ANY CURRENT ASPECTS OF SOUTH AFRICAN NUCLEAR PROGRAM WHICH WOULD SUPPORT PROPAGANDA EXPLOITATION.

7. BEYOND THIS, WE BELIEVE THAT THE NUCLEAR SUPPLIERS HAVE AN IMPORTANT RESPONSIBILITY TO DO EVERYTHING POSSIBLE TO AVOID A NUCLEAR EXPLOSIVE PROGRAM IN SOUTH AFRICA, AND THAT OUR RESPONSE TO THIS SITUATION WILL BE SEEN AS A TEST OF THE EFFECTIVENESS OF SUPPLIER COOPERATION. WE EXPECT TO STAY IN CLOSE TOUCH WITH YOU IN DEALING WITH THE SOUTH AFRICAN PROBLEM.

8. U.S. INTELLIGENCE INFORMATION AND CONCLUSIONS DISCUSSED ABOVE, AND POLICY CONSIDERATIONS FLOWING FROM IT, ARE OF HIGHEST SENSITIVITY AND SHOULD BE CLOSELY HELD WITHIN GOVERNMENT OF FRG.

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