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FM WASHINGTON

TO PRIORITY FCO

TELNO 947

OF 142340Z APRIL 86

INFO PRIORITY MOSCOW, UKDEL NATO, BONN, PARIS, MODUK

YOUR TELNO 650: NUCLEAR TESTING: NEW US/SOVIET DIALOGUE?

1. WE HAVE OF COURSE PROBED WHAT LIES BEHIND AMBASSADOR RIDGWAY'S REPORT (MY TELNO 884) THAT THE ADMINISTRATION LAST WEEK SUGGESTED TO DOBRYNIN A NEW DIALOGUE ON NUCLEAR TESTING, WITHOUT PRE-CONDITIONS.

2. WE UNDERSTAND (PLEASE PROTECT) THAT THE PRESIDENT HIMSELF PUT THE SUGGESTION TO DOBRYNIN AND SPOKE OF A QUOTE DISCUSSION WITHOUT PRE-CONDITIONS OF THE CONCERNS OF BOTH SIDES WITH RESPECT TO NUCLEAR TESTING UNQUOTE. IT APPEARS THAT THIS SUGGESTION IS INTENDED TO BUILD ON THE PROPOSAL IN THE PRESIDENT'S DECEMBER LETTER TO GORBACHEV. THE PRESIDENT THEN REFERRED TO THE US PROPOSALS ON TTBT VERIFICATION (IE SITE VISITS FOR CALIBRATION PURPOSES, TO ENSURE ADEQUATE VERIFICATION OF COMPLIANCE WITH THE 150KT CEILING), AND THE SOVIET SUGGESTION FOR DISCUSSIONS ON VERIFICATION OF A MORATORIUM/BAN, AND SUGGESTED THAT EXPERTS SHOULD GET TOGETHER IN FEBRUARY TO DISCUSS BOTH SIDES' IDEAS. THE RUSSIANS IGNORED THIS MESSAGE AT THE TIME, AND UNTIL THIS MONTH SHOWED NO SIGN OF TAKING IT UP. HOWEVER, WHEN FASCELL AND BROOMFIELD SAW GORBACHEV ON 4 APRIL, GORBACHEV'S QUESTION (PARA 6 OF MOSCOW TELNO 397) AS TO QUOTE WHY THE TWO PROPOSALS COULD NOT BE COMBINED UNQUOTE STRUCK THEM AS POSSIBLY AN ECHO OF THE DECEMBER US PROPOSAL. MOREOVER, THEY NOTED THAT SIMILAR LANGUAGE ABOUT COMBINING THE TWO SIDES' PROPOSALS (QUOTE LET US DISCUSS BOTH OUR PROPOSAL ABOUT ENDING TESTS AND THE AMERICAN PROPOSAL FOR MONITORING THEM UNQUOTE - PARA 7 OF MOSCOW TELNO 400) APPEARED IN GORBACHEV'S TOLL'YATTI SPEECH ON 8 APRIL. HENCE THE PRESIDENT'S SUGGESTION TO DOBRYNIN, ON 9 APRIL.

3. STATE SAY THAT THE PRESIDENT'S SUGGESTION WAS AN INFORMAL ONE AND MAY BE TURNED INTO A FORMAL PROPOSAL WHEN THE RUSSIANS

- 1 -
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HAVE CONDUCTED A NUCLEAR TEST. THEY ENVISAGE THAT, IF THE SUGGESTION EVOKES A POSITIVE SOVIET RESPONSE, A NEW BILATERAL DISCUSSION, SEPARATE FROM THE GENEVA NEGOTIATION, WOULD BE INITIATED, AT EXPERT LEVEL. THE US SIDE WOULD OF COURSE MAINTAIN THAT TTBT VERIFICATION (CORTEX ETC) WAS THE URGENT PRIORITY, AND THAT THE MONITORING/VERIFICATION OR ANY OTHER ASPECT OF A COMPREHENSIVE BAN WAS, BY CONTRAST, A LONG TERM AND HYPOTHETICAL ISSUE. THEY PROPOSE TO MAINTAIN THEIR PRESENT PUBLIC LINE ON A CTB, IE THAT IT IS QUOTE A LONG TERM AIM OF US POLICY UNQUOTE, BUT THAT TESTING WILL BE NECESSARY AS LONG AS IS DETERRENCE.

4. THE BALL IS NOW SEEN AS FIRMLY IN THE SOVIET COURT.

COMMENT.

5. IT IS STRIKING THAT THERE HAS BEEN NO PUBLIC REFERENCE HERE TO THIS ASPECT OF THE MEETINGS WITH DOBRYNIN, AND THAT THE US SUGGESTION FOR DIALOGUE HAS NOT BEEN SURFACED, DESPITE THE PRESS/CONGRESSIONAL COMPLAINTS ABOUT LAST WEEK'S NEVADA TEST. IT IS NOT CLEAR AT THIS STAGE WHETHER IT REPRESENTS A SIGNIFICANT NEW DEPARTURE ON SUBSTANCE: WHILE THE ADMINISTRATION WILL NO DOUBT TRY TO LIMIT ANY NEW DIALOGUE WITH THE RUSSIANS TO TTBT VERIFICATION ISSUES, IT WILL CLEARLY BE HARD FOR THEM, GIVEN THE QUOTE WITHOUT PRE-CONDITIONS UNQUOTE NATURE OF THEIR SUGGESTION, TO AVOID DISCUSSION OF CTB ISSUES ALTOGETHER (WE KNOW THAT OSD WERE OPPOSED TO THE SUGGESTION FOR THAT REASON). IN THAT SENSE, SOVIET ACCEPTANCE OF THE SUGGESTION WOULD PUT CTB BACK ON THE US/SOVIET AGENDA, THOUGH GUARDEDLY.

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