



Department of State

INCOMING TELEGRAM

SECRET N00357

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ACTION N00S-00

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FM AMEMBASSY PRETORIA
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 8718

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E. O. 12065: XDS-3 10/30/99 (EDMUNDSON, W.B.) OR-M
TAGS: MNUC, TECH, PARM, PORG, SF
SUBJECT: (S) SUSPECTED NUCLEAR EVENT: STILL NO MEETING
WITH SOUTH AFRICAN PRIME MINISTER

REFERENCE: (A) STATE 283007; (B) PRETORIA 9878

1. (S - ENTIRE TEXT)

2. I CALLED FOURIE THIS AFTERNOON (OCTOBER 31) TO CHECK ON STATUS OF MY REQUEST TO SEE P.W. BOTHA. HE SAID HE DID NOT HAVE ANYTHING YET, BUT ADDED THAT HE COULD TRY TO ARRANGE MEETING WITH FOREIGN MINISTER IF I WISHED. I SAID THAT SINCE I HAD ALREADY SEEN THE FOREIGN MINISTER AND HAD ALSO BEEN INSTRUCTED TO SEEK A PRIVATE MEETING WITH THE PRIME MINISTER, I WOULD WAIT. HE COULD MAKE NO PREDICTION BUT SAID HE THOUGHT IT WOULD BE AT LEAST TOMORROW OR THE NEXT DAY BEFORE HE WOULD HAVE ANYTHING.

3. FOURIE THEN MENTIONED THAT THEY NOW HAVE VERBATIM RECORD OF UNGA MEETING HE TOLD ME ABOUT MONDAY (PRETORIA 9833) AND SOME "OTHER INFORMATION" HE COULD GIVE ME. (NEIL VAN HEERDEN HAD RAISED UNGA MEETING WITH DCM AGAIN YESTERDAY WITH COMMENT THAT US REP MIGHT HAVE SPOKEN UP TO SET RECORD STRAIGHT WHEN CHAIRMAN ASKED IF THERE WERE ANY

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OBJECTIONS TO NIGERIAN AMBASSADOR CLARK'S REQUEST FOR SYG REPORT ON THE SUSPECTED NUCLEAR EVENT.) THE "OTHER" INFORMATION, APPARENTLY IS A REPORT OF SOUTH AFRICA'S ATOMIC ENERGY BOARD ON DAILY MONITORING OF RADIOACTIVITY LEVELS THROUGH OCTOBER 22 WHICH HE WILL GIVE ME AS SOON AS IT HAS BEEN TRANSLATED FROM AFRIKAANS TO ENGLISH. FOURIE SAID THIS DATA IS ALREADY AVAILABLE TO THE U.S. AND UK GOVERNMENTS THROUGH AN ARRANGEMENT WHOSE EXACT NATURE HE DID NOT KNOW BUT WHICH HAD BEEN IN EFFECT SINCE THE FRENCH NUCLEAR TESTS IN AFRICA. ACCORDING TO AEB CHAIRMAN DE VILLIERS, HE SAID, THIS DATA SHOWS THAT THE DAILY SAMPLES OF RADIOACTIVITY HAVE NEVER BEEN LOWER THAN RIGHT NOW, "SO YOUR PEOPLE SHOULD KNOW THAT THERE HAS BEEN NO EXPLOSION, THAT THE IDEA IS NONSENSE."

4. I SAID THAT I WOULD BE MOST GRATEFUL FOR A COPY OF THE AEB REPORT AND ANY OTHER DATA OF THIS NATURE. I THEN REPEATED DEFENSE SECRETARY BROWN'S POINT ABOUT OUR INABILITY SO FAR TO PROVE A NEGATIVE, ADDING THAT OUR SCIENTISTS COULD CERTAINLY NOT AGREE THAT THE POSSIBILITY OF AN EXPLOSION WAS "NONSENSE." FOURIE SAID THAT THE SAG SCIENTISTS MUST BE RATHER DUMB, THEN, IF THEY MAINTAINED THAT NO EXPLOSION COULD HAVE OCCURRED. I SAID I WOULD NOT CALL SAG SCIENTISTS--MANY OF WHOM HAD HAD SOME U.S. TRAINING--DUMB, BUT I ASSUMED HE WOULD NOT CALL AMERICAN SCIENTISTS DUMB FOR TREATING THEIR DATA SERIOUSLY; THIS WAS A SCIENTIFIC ARGUMENT I WAS NOT GOING TO GET INTO.

5. FOURIE THEN QUOTED TO ME AN ARTICLE BY U.S. COLUMNIST JOHN P. WALLER, SENT TO ALL HEARST PAPERS, ALLEGING THAT PRESIDENT CARTER HAD ORDERED AN ALL-OUT INTELLIGENCE EFFORT TO FIND SOMETHING (E.G., THROUGH AIRCRAFT AIR FILTERS, ETC.) TO PROVE THE NUCLEAR CHARGE AND COUNTER THE ATTACKS

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ON SALT WHICH HAD BEEN DESCRIBED IN AN ARTICLE (WHICH WE HAVE NOT SEEN HERE) BY JOHN SCALLY. I READ HIM HODDING CARTER'S RESPONSE TO THIS KIND OF PRESS SPECULATION (STATE 283814 OF OCTOBER 30) AND SAID USG COULD NOT BE HELD RESPONSIBLE FOR THE HIGH LEVEL OF PRESS PLAY THESE KIND OF STORIES WERE BOUND TO RECEIVE IN THE U.S., THE UN, AND OTHER PARTS OF THE WORLD.

6. EARLIER IN THE DAY, I LEARNED FROM CANADIAN AMBASSADOR MIDDLETON THAT YESTERDAY (OCTOBER 30), HE HAD SEEN FOURIE ON INSTRUCTIONS TO ASK ABOUT THE "ALLEGED NUCLEAR EXPLOSION" AND TO URGE SAG ACCESSION TO THE NPT. MIDDLETON SAID FOURIE CATEGORICALLY DENIED TO HIM THAT SOUTH AFRICA WAS INVOLVED, AND THEN SAID THAT THE SAG DID NOT APPRECIATE THIS MATTER BEING RAISED IN CONNECTION WITH THE NPT. THIS MAY REFLECT MEDIA-REPORTED SAG FEELINGS OF RESENTFUL SUSPICION THAT THE SUSPECTED NUCLEAR EVENT WAS DESIGNED (OR WILL BE USED) TO PRESSURE SOUTH AFRICA ON THE NPT.
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NO DISSEMINATION