



Department of State

OUTGOING TELEGRAM
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INFO AMEMBASSY LONDON PRIORITY
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E.O. 12065: RDS-2 2/2/00 (HARROP, WILLIAM C.)

TAGS: PARM MNUC, TECH, SF, US

SUBJECT: GUIDANCE ON SUSPECTED NUCLEAR EVENT

REF: (A) CAPE TOWN 207, (B) STATE 27619, (C) STATE 27988

1. CONFIDENTIAL (ENTIRE TEXT)
2. IN RESPONSE REF A, YOU NOW HAVE REFS B AND C. ADDITIONALLY, YOU WILL SHORTLY RECEIVE ANALYTICAL ARTICLE APPEARING IN FEBRUARY 1 SCIENCE MAGAZINE AND, PENDING FINAL CLEARANCES

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DETAILED GUIDANCE ON THE FRANK PRESS PANEL'S REVIEW OF THE SUSPECTED NUCLEAR EVENT. DEPARTMENT WILL TRANSMIT LATTER ASAP TO CAPE TOWN AND OTHER CAPITALS INCLUDING LONDON.

3. LATTER MESSAGE WILL PROVIDE FURTHER GUIDANCE ON SOME TECHNICAL ASPECTS RAISED BY O'TOOLE ARTICLE. WHILE IT WILL NOT SPECIFICALLY ADDRESS QUESTION OF SIGNALS PICKED UP BY BOTH BHANGMETERS ABOARD VELA, THIS MATTER WAS ADDRESSED IN PRESS PANEL'S REVIEW OF ALL AVAILABLE DATA; PANEL RULED OUT POSSIBILITY OF SATELLITE MALFUNCTION. WITH REGARD TO REPORTS OF ALLEGED SOUTH AFRICAN NAVAL EXERCISE, FOLLOWING MAY BE USEFUL. FYI ONLY. THE REPORT MENTIONED IN O'TOOLE ARTICLE WAS A GARBLED ACCOUNT 1) OF THE CLOSING OF SIMONSTOWN FOR A HARBOR DEFENSE EXERCISE ON SEPTEMBER 17-23, WHICH WAS PUBLICLY ANNOUNCED IN GOVERNMENT GAZETTE OF

AUGUST 31 AND WHICH DAO SUBSEQUENTLY CONCLUDED WAS IN FACT A HARBOR DEFENSE EXERCISE (SEE PRETORIA DAO 0589 AND 0590) AND/OR 2) A REPORT OF AN ALERT OF AIR-SEA SEARCH AND RESCUE TEAMS AT SALDANHA BAY ON SEPTEMBER 22-23. ASIDE FROM THESE REPORTS, THE INTELLIGENCE COMMUNITY HAS NO OTHER INFORMATION ABOUT SOUTH AFRICAN NAVAL MOVEMENTS AROUND SEPTEMBER 22 THAT WOULD SHED LIGHT ON THE SUSPECTED NUCLEAR EVENT. END FYI.

4. IN PRIVATE CONVERSATIONS WITH SAG OFFICIALS, YOU MAY WANT TO NOTE THAT THE WASHINGTON POST STORY, LIKE SOME SIMILAR PRESS REPORTAGE WHICH PRECEDED IT, REFLECTS SELECTIVE AND HIGHLY DISTORTED INTERPRETATION OF DATA WHICH BEARS ON THE SEPTEMBER 22 SUSPECTED EVENT. THE ARTICLE DOES NOT RPT NOT REFLECT EXECUTIVE BRANCH POSITIONS OR JUDGMENTS, AND IS BASED AT LEAST IN PART ON UNAUTHORIZED DISCLOSURES. YOU SHOULD ALSO EMPHASIZE THAT THE OFFICIAL USG

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ATTITUDE IS INDEED THAT EXPRESSED IN THE PRESS GUIDANCE I.E.
WE ARE UNABLE TO DETERMINE ON THE BASIS OF PRESENTLY
AVAILABLE EVIDENCE WHETHER A NUCLEAR EXPLOSION DID TAKE
PLACE AND IT IS NOT POSSIBLE TO SPECULATE ON WHO MIGHT HAVE
BEEN RESPONSIBLE IF ONE OCCURRED. VANCE

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