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TO IMMEDIATE FCO

TELEGRAM NUMBER 62 OF 16 MARCH 81

INFO IMMEDIATE WASHINGTON, MODUK

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VISIT BY SOUTH AFRICAN DEFENCE FORCE OFFICERS TO WASHINGTON.

1. THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE PRESS TODAY (16 MARCH) REPORTS PROMINENTLY THAT FIVE SENIOR SOUTH AFRICAN MILITARY OFFICERS ARE ON THEIR WAY BACK TO SOUTH AFRICA HAVING HAD TO CUT SHORT, AFTER FOUR DAYS, A VISIT TO WASHINGTON. OUR EMBASSY IN WASHINGTON WILL NO DOUBT BE TELEGRAPHING A FULL ACCOUNT BUT, ACCORDING TO THE PRESS HERE, THE SOUTH AFRICAN OFFICERS, WHO WENT TO WASHINGTON AS GUESTS OF THE "VERY CONSERVATIVE" (AND NON-OFFICIAL) AMERICAN SECURITY COUNCIL, DID NOT DISCLOSE THEIR MILITARY STATUS WHEN APPLYING FOR VISAS, AND ACCORDING TO THE REPORT REPRESENTED THEMSELVES AS CIVILIAN OFFICIALS TRAVELLING TO WASHINGTON FOR DISCUSSIONS WITH THE SOUTH AFRICAN EMBASSY. AFTER ARRIVAL HOWEVER THEY HAD MEETINGS WITH PENTAGON AND NSC OFFICIALS, CONGRESSIONAL AIDES AND POSSIBLY WITH A CABINET MINISTER, TO WHOM THEY GAVE BRIEFINGS ON THE SOVIET THREAT TO SOUTHERN AFRICA. STATE DEPARTMENT SOURCES ARE QUOTED AS SAYING THAT THE TRUE NATURE OF THE GROUP WAS ONLY DISCOVERED WHEN THEY ARRIVED ON 13 MARCH FOR A MEETING AT THE STATE DEPARTMENT, WHERE REAR ADMIRAL DU PLESSIS WAS RECOGNISED. RAPID CONSULTATIONS THEN APPARENTLY TOOK PLACE AS A RESULT OF WHICH THE GROUP WERE ASKED TO LEAVE. THE PRESS SPECULATE THAT THE INCIDENT "IS CERTAIN TO TRIGGER A SHOW-DOWN BETWEEN RIVAL FACTIONS FIGHTING OVER PRESIDENT RONALD REAGAN'S NEW AFRICA POLICY". THE STATE DEPARTMENT ARE QUOTED AS SAYING THAT THE UNITED STATES HAD BANNED OFFICIAL LEVEL MILITARY MEETINGS WITH SOUTH AFRICA SINCE 1963; THEY DESCRIBED THE SOUTH AFRICANS' FAILURE TO IDENTIFY THEMSELVES AS MILITARY OFFICERS WHEN APPLYING FOR VISAS AS "JUST SHORT OF FRAUDULENT".

2 THE AMERICAN DEFENCE ATTACHE (PLEASE PROTECT) HAS

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FAILURE TO IDENTIFY THEMSELVES AS MILITARY OFFICERS WHEN APPLYING
FOR VISAS AS "JUST SHORT OF FRAUDULENT".

2. THE AMERICAN DEFENCE ATTACHE (PLEASE PROTECT) HAS
CONFIRMED TO MINE THAT THREE OF THE SADF OFFICERS CONCERNED ARE
LIEUTENANT GENERAL P W VAN DER WESTHUIZEN, CHIEF OF STAFF
INTELLIGENCE SADF, REAR ADMIRAL N A DU PLESSIS FORMERLY SOUTH
AFRICAN DEFENCE ATTACHE IN WASHINGTON AND NOW WITH THE NATIONAL
INTELLIGENCE SERVICE (HE WAS PNG'D IN APRIL 1979 FOLLOWING THE
US SPY PLANE INCIDENT HERE) AND BRIGADIER C J VAN TONDER OF THE
SADF INTELLIGENCE STAFF. THE AMERICAN DEFENCE ATTACHE SAID THAT
DURING THE PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION HE HAD BEEN APPROACHED FOR A VISA
FOR VAN DER WESTHUIZEN BUT HAD REPLIED THAT AN APPLICATION AT THAT
TIME WOULD BE TURNED DOWN. HE SUGGESTED THAT THE SOUTH AFRICANS
SHOULD WAIT UNTIL THE ELECTION RESULTS WERE KNOWN AND IF THERE WERE
A CHANGE OF ADMINISTRATION TO APPLY AGAIN, BUT NOT TOO SOON.
IN THE EVENT, HOWEVER, NO FURTHER APPROACH WAS MADE TO THE
AMERICAN DEFENCE ATTACHE AND VISA APPLICATIONS WERE SENT IN AS
DESCRIBED. EVEN SO, THE AMERICAN EMBASSY UNDOUBTEDLY MISSED A
TRICK IN FAILING TO SPOT WHO THEY WERE.

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