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TO IMMEDIATE FCO

TELEGRAM NUMBER 226 OF 21 JUNE

INFO IMMEDIATE PRETORIA, WASHINGTON, PARIS, BONN, OTTAWA, UKMIS  
NEW YORK, GABORONE, MASERU, LUANDA, MAPUTO.

YOUR TELNO 64 (NOT TO ALL): SOUTH AFRICAN EXTERNAL POLICY.

SUMMARY

1. I DO NOT BELIEVE THAT THERE HAS BEEN ANY FUNDAMENTAL CHANGE IN POLICY BY THE SOUTH AFRICAN GOVERNMENT. EVERYTHING THAT HAS HAPPENED RECENTLY ON THE EXTERNAL FRONT CAN BE SEEN AS CONSISTENT WITH EXISTING POLICY. THIS VIEW IS BORNE OUT BY PRESIDENT'S REMARKS THIS WEEK AT THE INAUGURATION OF THE MULTI-PARTY CONFERENCE (MPC) ADMINISTRATION IN WINDHOEK AND ON THE LAST DAY OF PARLIAMENT. IT IS ALSO CONFIRMED BY THE SENIOR DFA OFFICIAL IN PIK BOTHA'S PRIVATE OFFICE.

DETAIL

2. ONE OF THE MOST IMPORTANT ELEMENTS IN SOUTH AFRICAN POLICY HAS ALWAYS BEEN TO PREVENT ATTACKS ON SOUTH AFRICA BY THE ANC. THERE IS NO SIGNIFICANT DIFFERENCE BETWEEN DFA AND MILITARY ABOUT THE NEED FOR THIS, AND INDEED THE OBJECTIVE IS ENDORSED EVEN BY THE LIBERAL WHITE OPPOSITION. THEY HAVE STILL TO CONDEMN THE GABORONE RAID. IT IS SIGNIFICANT THAT THE DECISION TO RAID GABORONE WAS MADE BY THE MINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS IN THE CAPACITY AS ACTING MINISTER OF DEFENCE (GENERAL MALAN WAS AWAY). THE DFA HAVE TOLD US THAT THERE WERE NO DIFFERENCES BETWEEN THE DEPARTMENTS OF DEFENCE AND THE DFA ON THE DECISION.

3. THE OBJECTIVE OF DENYING FACILITIES TO THE ANC IN NEIGHBOURING COUNTRIES HAS BEEN APPROACHED IN DIFFERENT WAYS AT DIFFERENT TIMES. THE 1982 ATTACK ON MASERU AND THE 1984 NKOMATI ACCORD BOTH LED TO NEIGHBOURING COUNTRIES CLAMPING DOWN ON ANC ACTIVITIES. THE SOUTH AFRICAN GOVERNMENT HOPE THAT THE RECENT RAID ON GABORONE WILL HAVE THE SAME RESULT. IN THIS RESPECT POLICY IS CONSTANT AND NOT A RESULT OF VICTORIES FOR HAWKS OR DOVES. IN A SPEECH TO THE CLOSING SESSION OF PARLIAMENT ON 19 JUNE THE STATE PRESIDENT DEFENDED SOUTH AFRICA'S RIGHT TO COMBAT TERRORISM MAINTAINING THAT THE SOUTH AFRICAN GOVERNMENT CANNOT SIT BACK AND ALLOW TERRORISTS TO MURDER AND KILL SOUTH AFRICAN CITIZENS WITH IMPUNITY. HE HAS SAID THIS BEFORE. AT THE SAME TIME HE OFFERED A 'HAND OF FRIENDSHIP' TO NEIGHBOURS AND EXPRESSED THE HOPE THAT THERE COULD BE AGREEMENT ON CERTAIN GROUND RULES ON REGIONAL CO-OPERATION, A THEME WHICH HE HAD ALSO SPOKEN ABOUT IN HIS SPEECH IN WINDHOEK ON 17 JUNE. THE SOUTH AFRICAN MINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS REVEALED YESTERDAY (20 JUNE) THAT HE HAD WRITTEN TO HIS BOTSWANA COUNTERPART AFTER THE RAID SEEKING TO PUT BILATERAL RELATIONS ON A BETTER FOOTING.

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4. MANLEY, IN PIK BOTHA'S OFFICE, HAS OPENLY ADMITTED TO THE HEAD OF CHANCERY THAT THE RAID ON GABORONE WAS A REPRISAL FOLLOWING THE ATTACK EARLIER IN THE WEEK ON THE HOME OF A COLOURED DEPUTY MINISTER IN CAPE TOWN IN WHICH HE WAS INJURED. MANLEY SAID THAT THE SOUTH AFRICAN GOVERNMENT NEEDED TO BE SEEN TO BE REACTING TO ANC ACTIVITIES. HENCE THE TIMING AND THE WAY IN WHICH THE RAID HAD BEEN CARRIED OUT. THE SOUTH AFRICANS HAD FIRM INFORZATPON THAT DESPITE PREVIOUS EFFORTS TO PERSUADE THE BOTSWANA GOVERNMENT TO CLAMP DOWN ON THE ANC, THE ANC WERE CONTINUING TO USE BOTSWANA AS A BASE. THE SOUTH AFRICANS HAD INTERCEPTS WHICH PROVED THIS ALTHOUGH THEY COULD NOT PRODUCE THESE PUBLICLY. ONE HAD REVEALED THE EXISTENCE OF AN ANC PLAN WHICH IF PURSUED WOULD HAVE LED TO ATTEMPTS TO KILL NOT ONLY BLACK AND COLOURED LEADERS BUT ALSO WHITE MINISTERS. PIK BOTHA HAD BEEN SPECIFICALLY MENTIONED. MANLEY CLAIMED THAT THE SADF HAD CAPTURED AN ANC COMPUTER AND DISC STORE IN GABORONE WHICH IF RELEASED WOULD SUBSTANTPATE SOME OF THEIR CLAIMS ABOUT WHAT WAS BEING PLANNED IN BOTSWANA. A MEMBER OF THE SECURITY POLICE YESTERDAY SHOWED THE PRESS A SMALL QUANTPTY OF WEAPONS AND DOCUMENTS ALLEGEDLY SEIZED IN THE RAID INCLUDING A MAP OF THE ROSSING INSTALLATION IN NAMIBIA AND RECORDS OF TELEPHONE CALLS WHICH THE POLICE CONSIDER EVIDENCE OF THE ROLE OF THE ANC PREMISES RAIDED.

5. OUR CONCLUSION IS THAT IN ADDITION TO SERVING AS A RETALIATION THE RAID WAS ALSO MOUNTED TO ACHIEVE CERTAIN SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES. HAD THE ATTACK ON THE DEPUTY MINISTER NOT OCCURRED, A RAID WOULD PROBABLY STILL HAVE BEEN CARRIED OUT. IT WOULD NOT NECESSARILY HAVE BEEN AN OPEN MILITARY OPERATION. ALTHOUGH A RAID OF THIS NATURE NEEDS DETAILED PLANNING AND IT IS LIKELY THAT SOME SORT OF CONTPNGENCY PLAN FOR AN SADF ATTACK EXISTED. THE TARGETS HAD ALREADY BEEN IDENTIFIED WELL BEFOREHAND PROBABLY BY COVERT OBSERVATION BY THE SOUTH AFRICANS.

6. WE ALSO CONSIDER THAT THE SOUTH AFRICANS MUST CERTAINLY HAVE TAKEN INTO ACCOUNT THAT THEIR ACTIVITIES WOULD LEAD TO EMBARRASSMENT FOR WESTERN GOVERNMENTS AND CRITICISM BY NEIGHBOURS. THEIR EXPERIENCE WITH THEIR RAID ON MASERU AND THEIR BOMBING OF A FACTORY OUTSIDE MAPUTO AFTER A BOMB EXPLOSION AT AN SADF HEADQUARTERS IN PRETORIA IN 1983 WILL NOT HAVE DETERRED THEM FROM GOING AHEAD. IN BOTH THESE CASES THEY BELIEVE THAT THEIR ACTION LED DIRECTLY TO A SUBSEQUENT IMPROVEMENT IN RELATIONS. THEY HAVE DECIDED THAT ACTION AGAINST SPECIFIC TARGETS IS NOT LIKELY TO RESULT IN A REVERSAL OF THE POLICY OF WESTERN GOVERNMENTS TOWARDS SOUTH AFRICA. PRESIDENT REAGAN HAS ALREADY CONFIRMED THAT THERE WILL BE NO REVERSAL OF THE US POLICY OF CONSTRUCTIVE ENGAGEMENT AND THIS IS SEEN HERE AS CONFIRMING THE SOUTH AFRICAN ASSESSMENT THAT THE POLITICAL RISK OF THE GABORONE ACTION WAS ACCEPTABLE.

7. IT HAS BEEN A SOUTH AFRICAN OBJECTIVE FOR A LONG TIME TO SUPPORT UNITA AND TO TRY TO ENSURE THAT THE ANGOLA/NAMIBIA ROUTE DOES NOT BECOME A ROUTE THROUGH WHICH THE ANC CAN ENTER SOUTH AFRICA. PROBES AND COVERT ACTION SUCH AS AT CABINDA ARE NOT A NEW DEPARTURE BY THE SOUTH AFRICANS. THE RAID ON CABINDA WAS ESSENTIALLY A HANGOVER FROM A LONG-STANDING POLICY OF COVERT ACTIVITY WHICH WENT WRONG. BUT THE POTENTIAL DAMAGE IF THE OPERATION MISFIRED SEEMS TO HAVE BEEN SERIOUSLY UNDERESTIMATED. THE GOVERNMENT MAY HAVE BEEN PERSUADED THAT THERE WAS ONLY A MINIMAL RISK OF THINGS GOING WRONG, ITSELF AN ERROR OF JUDGEMENT.

#### NAMIBIA

8. THE INTENTION TO MOVE TO A MORE BROADLY BASED ADMINISTRATION IN NAMIBIA HAS BEEN IN SOUTH AFRICAN MINDS FOR SOME YEARS AND THE SPECIFIC PROPOSAL TO INTRODUCE AN MPC ADMINISTRATION HAS BEEN UNDER DISCUSSION FOR THE LAST SIX MONTHS. IN EVERYTHING THAT THE SOUTH AFRICAN GOVERNMENT HAVE SAID ABOUT THE MPC ADMINISTRATION THEY HAVE BEEN CAREFUL TO AVOID THE USE OF THE TERM 'INTERIM GOVERNMENT'. THE STATE PRESIDENT KEPT TO THIS LINE IN WINDHOEK ON 17 JUNE. HE REPEATED HIS EARLIER REFERENCES TO THE NEED FOR AN 'INTERNATIONALLY ACCEPTABLE SOLUTION' IN NAMIBIA. WE REMAIN OF THE VIEW THAT THE SOUTH AFRICANS WILL DO NOTHING THAT WOULD BE LIKELY TO END AMERICAN EFFORTS TO BRING ABOUT CUBAN WITHDRAWAL PREMATURELY. BUT THERE IS NO SIGN THAT THE SOUTH AFRICANS ARE PERSUADED THAT IT IS IN THEIR INTEREST TO MAKE SIGNIFICANT CONCESSIONS TO SPEED UP THE PROCESS. THIS MAY LEAD TO FURTHER PROBLEMS FOR US/SA RELATIONS. THE SOUTH AFRICANS PROBABLY SEE WITHDRAWAL AS INCREASINGLY UNLIKELY, BUT WE DO NOT BELIEVE THAT THEY ARE FRUSTRATED BY THE US INABILITY TO DELIVER ON THE CUBANS. THEY DO NOT WANT TO RUSH THINGS AND COULD ACCEPT A RESIDUAL CUBAN PRESENCE WITHOUT TOO MUCH DIFFICULTY IF THEY WANTED PROGRESS. THE SOUTH AFRICANS ARE IRRITATED WITH THE US ADMINISTRATION'S EFFORTS TO FORCE THE PACE OVER INTERNAL REFORM AND NAMIBIA. THIS HAS SHOWED THROUGH IN VARIOUS RECENT SOUTH AFRICAN GOVERNMENT STATEMENTS. NONETHELESS THEY ARE PREOCCUPIED WITH THE INTERNAL SITUATION WITHIN THE REPUBLIC AND WILL NOT WANT TO COMPLICATE THEIR PROBLEMS BY UNNECESSARY FURTHER EARLY CHANGES IN WINDHOEK. IT WOULD BE UNCHARACTERISTIC FOR THE SOUTH AFRICANS TO FORCE THE PACE UNNECESSARILY.

9. ALTHOUGH THE DFA CONTINUE TO ASSURE US THAT THE GOVERNMENT MAINTAIN THEIR COMMITMENT TO A 435 SETTLEMENT, THE INSTALLATION OF A COOPERATIVE MPC ADMINISTRATION IN WINDHOEK IN NO WAY CUTS ACROSS SOUTH AFRICAN INTERESTS. THE ADMINISTRATION NEEDS TIME TO SETTLE IN AND THERE COULD BE DIVIDENDS FOR SOUTH AFRICA IF THE MPC WERE THEN SUCCESSFUL IN BUILDING UP INCREASED LOCAL SUPPORT.

CONCLUSION

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10. SOUTH AFRICAN POLICY IS BASED ON THE ASSUMPTION THAT SOUTH AFRICA MUST NOT BE DETERRED BY INTERNATIONAL CRITICISM FROM HITTING BACK HARD. THE SOUTH AFRICAN GOVERNMENT ARGUE THAT TO TAKE A SOFTER LINE WOULD ONLY ENCOURAGE THE ANC AND CAUSE NEIGHBOURING COUNTRIES TO BE MORE ACCOMMODATING TOWARDS ALLOWING THE ANC TO OPERATE FROM THEIR TERRITORIES.

11. THE GOVERNMENT ALSO CALCULATE THAT THEIR POLITICAL SUPPORTERS WANT FIRM ACTION AND IN THIS COUNTRY THIS IS A MORE WEIGHTY FACTOR THAN THE CALCULATION OF INTERNATIONAL PRESSURE. IT CAN SOMETIMES LEAD TO SERIOUS MISCALCULATIONS.

12. THERE ARE CONSIDERABLE SIMILARITIES BETWEEN THE ATTACK ON GABORONE AND THE ATTACK ON MASERU IN 1983. BOTH OPERATIONS WERE MESSY, ESSENTIALLY RETALIATORY FOLLOWING A PARTICULAR INCIDENT AND LED TO THE DEATH OF INNOCENT PEOPLE BY ACCIDENT. THE REASONS THAT LED TO THE TWO ATTACKS AND THE RESPONSE ARE MUCH THE SAME. THIS IN ITSELF POINTS TO THE ESSENTIAL CONTINUITY OF SOUTH AFRICAN POLICY. IT HAS ALWAYS BEEN A MIXTURE OF STICK AND CARROT.

13. IN GENERAL IT IS LIKELY THAT THE SOUTH AFRICANS ARE FEELING EVEN MORE ISOLATED THAN USUAL, THAT BECAUSE OF THE TROUBLES IN THE TOWNSHIPS, PARTICULARLY IN THE EASTERN CAPE, THEY ARE ALSO FRUSTRATED AND PERHAPS EVEN A LITTLE RATTLED. P W BOTHA REGARDS IT AS ESSENTIAL TO RESTORE CONFIDENCE AT HOME, DESPITE THE PROBABILITY OF SERIOUS INTERNATIONAL REACTIONS TO RECENT EVENTS. IT WOULD BE A MISTAKE TO SEE THE CABINDA AND GABORONE RAIDS, AND THE NEW ADMINISTRATION IN NAMIBIA AS A NEW INITIATIVE. ALL ARE CONSISTENT WITH PREVIOUS POLICY.

MOBERLY

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