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FM WASHINGTON


TO IMMEDIATE FCO

TELNO 2496

OF 032130Z SEP 85

INFO PRETORIA, UKMIS NEW YORK

WASHINGTON TELNO 2457: US/SOUTH AFRICA

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1. I REPORTED IN MY DESPATCH OF 25 JULY THAT US POLICY TOWARDS SOUTHERN AFRICA WAS IN TATTERS. I FIND, ON MY RETURN FROM A MONTH'S LEAVE, THAT THE POSITION IS NOW EVEN WORSE.
 2. EVENTS IN SOUTH AFRICA - PRESIDENT BOTHA'S SPEECH AND CONTINUED REPRESSION - HAVE UNDERCUT THE ADMINISTRATION'S POLICY. THEIR INTENDED APPROACHES (WASHINGTON TELNO 2452) TO OTHER GOVERNMENTS TO ISSUE STATEMENTS CONDEMNING APARTHEID BUT OPPOSING FURTHER SANCTION HAVE BEEN PUT OFF. CONSTRUCTIVE ENGAGEMENT, THOUGH STILL STUBBORNLY DEFENDED BY CROCKER, HAS LOST ALL DOMESTIC CREDIBILITY.
 3. THE FINANCIAL CONSEQUENCES OF INTERNATIONAL LOSS OF CONFIDENCE HAVE ALREADY PROVED MORE PAINFUL FOR SOUTH AFRICA THAN ANY SANCTIONS ORIGINALLY PROPOSED. BUT THIS HAS NOT DEFUSED THE PRESSURE HERE FOR SANCTIONS. ON THE CONTRARY, THE BANKERS' JUDGEMENT, AND TELEVISION COVERAGE OF DEMONSTRATIONS AND VIOLENCE IN SOUTH AFRICA, SEEM TO HAVE REINFORCED THE BELIEF THAT NOW IS THE TIME FOR THE US TO TAKE A MORAL STAND AND STEP UP THE PRESSURE ON THE SOUTH AFRICAN AUTHORITIES FOR REFORM.
 4. THE ADMINISTRATION ARE IN DISARRAY. THEIR SUPPORTERS ON THE RIGHT ARE DIVIDED. THE PRESIDENT'S RECENT COMMENTS IN A RADIO INTERVIEW ON DE-SEGREGATION IN SOUTH AFRICA BETRAYED AN EMBARRASSING IGNORANCE OF THE TRUE SITUATION. THEY HAVE NOT YET DECIDED HOW TO DEAL WITH THE SANCTIONS LEGISLATION, NOW EXPECTED TO BE CONSIDERED, AND PROBABLY APPROVED, BY THE SENATE ON 9 SEPTEMBER.
 5. THE PRESIDENT IS UNLIKELY TO TAKE A DECISION (OR ACTION TO PRE-EMPT THE SENATE BY INTRODUCING LIMITED SANCTIONS BY EXECUTIVE ORDER) UNTIL THE LEGISLATION HAS ACTUALLY PASSED THE SENATE. THEREAFTER, THINGS MAY MOVE RAPIDLY: THE WHITE HOUSE HAVE 10 DAYS TO DECIDE WHETHER TO VETO, (AND WHETHER THEY HAVE THE SENATE VOTES TO SUSTAIN A VETO, AND, IF NOT, WHAT EXECUTIVE ORDER SANCTIONS WOULD SERVE TO INCREASE THEIR TALLY TO THE REQUIRED 34). BUT THEY WILL WISH TO AVOID A COINCIDENCE OF A POLICY ANNOUNCEMENT WITH MACHEL'S TALKS WITH PRESIDENT REAGAN ON 19 SEPTEMBER. WE SHALL DO OUR BEST TO GIVE YOU WARNING OF WHAT THEY FINALLY DECIDE. BUT CONSULTATION WITH THEIR ALLIES ON THIS ISSUE WILL NOT WEIGH

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HEAVILY IN THE BALANCE AGAINST THEIR CALCULATIONS OF THE SENATE
LINE-UP AND WHAT ACTION IS IN THEIR BEST (DOMESTIC) INTEREST.

6. THE KEY POINT IS THAT, WHATEVER THE ADMINISTRATION'S TACTICS
IN THE NEXT FORTNIGHT, IT NOW LOOKS VIRTUALLY CERTAIN THAT,
BARRING SOME UNEXPECTED REVERSAL IN PRETORIA, ADDITIONAL US
SANCTIONS WILL BE INTRODUCED THIS AUTUMN, AND PROBABLY BEFORE CHOGM.

WRIGHT

ORWRAN 1956

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