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E.O. 12065:  RDS 11/9/99 (BISHOP, JAMES K.) OR-M
TAGS:  PARM, TECH, NG
SUBJECT:  NIGER'S URANIUM SALES

REF:  A. STATE 241255, B. STATE 287126, C. VIENNA 10746,
D. VIENNA 11484

1. (S) - ENTIRE TEXT

2. SUMMARY:  THIS MESSAGE CONTAINS POINTS AMBASSADOR
PLANNED TO RAISE DURING NOW POSTPONED WASHINGTON CONSUL-
TATIONS.  INCLUDED ARE REQUEST THAT EMBASSY BE KEPT BETTER
INFORMED OF BACKGROUND AND DETAILS RELATED TO NIGER'S
SALES OF URANIUM TO LIBYA AND PAKISTAN, AND SUGGESTION
THAT FRENCH INTELLIGENCE MAY NOT BE AS SENSITIVE AS AP-
PARENTLY BELIEVED.  ADDITIONAL POINTS INCLUDE REMINDER OF
LOCAL FRANCO-AMERICAN COMMERCIAL RIVALRY IN URANIUM
SECTOR AND A CAUTION AGAINST FURTHER DEMARCHES TO GON
UNTIL SOMEONE IS PREPARED TO ACCUSE PAKISTANIS OF VIOLA-
TING THEIR IAEA OBLIGATIONS.  FINALLY, WE SUGGEST JOINT
ACTION WITH OTHER CONCERNED STATES AS WELL AS ACCEPTANCE
OF KOUNTCHE'S OFFER OF TECHNICAL TALKS.  END SUMMARY.

3. POSTPONEMENT OF THE U.S.-NIGER BILATERALS HAS FRUS
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TRATED PLANS FOR CONSULTATION WITH THE DEPARTMENT AND ACDA
ABOUT NIGER'S URANIUM SALES.  THE FOLLOWING ARE THE
PRINCIPAL POINTS AMBASSADOR HAD INTENDED TO RAISE FOR DIS-
CUSSION IN WASHINGTON.

4. THE DEPARTMENT IS NOT KEEPING US WELL INFORMED AS THIS
EXERCISE UNFOLDS.  WE HAVE NEVER RECEIVED THE EVIDENCE
REPORTEDLY AVAILABLE FROM U.S. SOURCES ABOUT NIGER'S
UNRECORDED SALES TO PAKISTAN WHICH WAS PROMISED IN REFTEL
A. APIEY HAS BEEN OMITTED AS AN ADDRESSEE ON SEVERAL
MESSAGES FROM THE DEPARTMENT DEALING WITH THIS SUBJECT;
REFTEL B APPEARS TO BE THE MOST RECENT EXAMPLE. WE
SUSPECT WE ALSO ARE BEING OMITTED ON MESSAGES FROM OTHER
POSTS, E.G. WE HAVE NEVER SEEN TRIPOLI'S RESPONSE TO
VIENNA'S INQUIRY ABOUT THE LENGTH OF TIME LIBYA WOULD BE
LIKELY TO TAKE TO RATIFY THE SAFEGUARDS AGREEMENT NEGOTIATED WITH THE IAEA (REFTEL D). FINALLY, WHILE THE DE-
PARTMENT BELATEDLY REPLIED TO A SERIES OF SPECIFIC QUE-
STIONS WE RAISED BY CABLE ON THIS SUBJECT, WE HAVE YET TO
RECEIVE THE BASIC BRIEFING PAPERS WE HAVE REQUESTED BY
CABLE AND OFFICIAL-INFORMAL.

5. WE ARE NOT CONVINCED FRENCH INTELLIGENCE ON THIS SUB-
JECT IS AS SENSITIVE OR AS PERSUASIVE AS PARIS AND THE
DEPARTMENT BELIEVE. THE FRENCH STATE COMPANY COGEMA MAN-
AGES BOTH OF NIGER'S URANIUM MINES. ITS EMPLOYEES WOULD
HAVE TO DELIVER TO NIGERIEN AUTHORITIES, OR TO THE PUR-
CHASER ITSELF, ANY URANIUM NIGER SOLD ON ITS OWN ACCOUNT
TO A FOREIGN BUYER. THE NIGERIENS REALIZE THAT THE FRENCH
KNOW HOW MUCH URANIUM IS BEING DELIVERED TO THEM FOR THIS
PURPOSE. THE NIGERIENS ALSO REALIZE IT WOULD BE DIFFICULT.
IF NOT IMPOSSIBLE, FOR URANIUM TO BE AIRLIFTED FROM THIS
COUNTRY WITHOUT THE KNOWLEDGE OF OMNIPRESENT FRENCH TECH-
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NICIANS.

6. IF THE FRENCH ARE NOT PREPARED TO CONFRONT THE NIGE-
RIENS WITH THE EVIDENCE THAT THEY HAVE SOLD MORE URANIUM
TO THE PASKISTANIS THAN EITHER PARTY HAS ADMITTED, THEY
COULD, WITHOUT EVIDENT RISK TO ANY INTELLIGENCE OPERATION,
ASK THE NIGERIENS WHAT THEY DID WITH THE URANIUM DELIVERED
TO THEM TO SELL ON THEIR OWN ACCOUNT.

7. IT SHOULD BE REMEMBERED THAT THE U.S. AND FRANCE ARE
TO SOME EXTENT RIVAL CUSTOMERS FOR NIGER'S URANIUM.
COGEMA SOUGHT OUT CONOCO AS A PARTNER WHEN THE NIGER
GOVERNMENT MADE IT CLEAR THAT FRANCE WOULD NOT BE ALLOWED
TO MONOPOLIZE NIGER'S URANIUM PRODUCTION. COGEMA AP-
PARENTLY SELECTED CONOCO BECAUSE IT THOUGHT THE AMERICAN
FIRM WOULD BE A DOCILE SILENT PARTNER. CONOCO HAS NOT
BEEN CONTENT TO TAKE A BACK SEAT AND CURRENTLY IS TALKING
ABOUT ELBOWING COGEMA ASIDE AND WORKING THE ENORMOUS
IMOURAREM DEPOSIT IN PARTNERSHIP WITH THE GON. WE DOUBT
THE FRENCH WOULD HAVE INVENTED THE EVIDENCE OF UNRECORDED
GON SALES TO PAKISTAN. BUT IN TRYING TO PIN THE MAR-
SHAL'S BADGE ON OUR SHIRT, THEY MAY BE INFLUENCED BY THE
REALIZATION THAT THE PARTY WHICH TAKES THE NIGERIENS TO
TASK FOR IRRESPONSIBLE BEHAVIOR IS GOING TO BE IN POOR
FAVOR HERE FOR SOME TIME.

8. FROM WHAT WE HAVE BEEN TOLD, IT APPEARS THE GON HAS
FULFILLED ALL ITS IAEA OBLIGATIONS, EVEN IF IT HAS MADE
UNACKNOWLEDGED SALES TO PAKISTAN, FOR IT IS THE LATTER
PARTY WHICH IS RESPONSIBLE FOR REPORTING SUCH TRANSACTIONS
TO THE IAEA. OBVIOUSLY, TECHNICAL COMPLIANCE WITH IAEA
OBLIGATIONS DOES NOT EXCUSE IGNORING PAKISTAN (AND

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LIBYA?) IN END-RUNNING THE RELEVANT IAEA REPORTING PRO-
CEDURES. BUT UNTIL SOMEONE IS PREPARED TO ACCUSE
PAKISTAN OF VIOLATING OR END-RUNNING ITS IAEA COMMITMENTS,
WE ARE IN AN UNTENABLE POSITION HECTORING THE NIGERIENS TO
RESTRICT THEIR URANIUM SHIPMENTS TO PAKISTAN AND LIBYA.

9. THE TRAFFIC WE HAVE SEEN INDICATES THAT WE AND THE
IAEA, WITH SOME RELUCTANT FRENCH PARTICIPATION, ARE THE
ONLY AUTHORITIES CURRENTLY ENGAGED IN THIS EXERCISE.
CANADIAN AND SWEDISH ENVOYS HAVE RAISED WITH US THEIR
GOVERNMENTS' CONCERN, AND THE RECORD SHOWS THAT THE
JAPANESE AND THE BRITISH SHARE THIS ATTITUDE. WHY ARE
WE NOT WORKING OUT A UNIFIED POSITION, EITHER WITHIN OR
OUTSIDE THE IAEA?

10. FINALLY, WHY HAVE WE (AND THE CANADIANS) FAILED TO
TAKE ADVANTAGE OF KOUNTCHE'S WILLINESS TO HOLD TECHNI-
CAL DISCUSSIONS ON THIS SUBJECT? THIS APPEARS A GOLDEN
OPPORTUNITY TO INVESTIGATE THE FACTS AS WELL AS TO SENSIB-
ITIZE THE RESPONSIBLE NIGERIEN AUTHORITIES TO OUR CONCERNS
ABOUT URANIUM SALES TO LIBYA AND PAKISTAN. BISHOP

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