

Message Text

SECRET

PAGE 01 STATE 199098
ORIGIN NODS-00

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 /001 R

DRAFTED BY AF/T:LRMACFARLAND:SAH
APPROVED BY AF:WEDMONDSON
S/PRS:JMEDEIROS
S/S-O:LRFLEISCHER

-----125641 211959Z /65

O 211946Z AUG 77 ZFF4
FM SECSTATE WASHDC
TO AMEMBASSY PRETORIA IMMEDIATE

S E C R E T STATE 199098

NODIS
FOR THE AMBASSADOR

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PARM, SF

SUBJECT: POSSIBLE SOUTH AFRICAN NUCLEAR PROGRAM: PRESS
COVERAGE

REF: PRETORIA 4239 (PARA 3.C)

1. WE HAVE CHECKED WITH AF/P AND S/PRS AND ASCERTAINED THAT DEPARTMENT SPOKESMAN HAS TO DATE MADE NO STATEMENT AT DEPARTMENT NOON BRIEFING ON SUBJECT, NOR HAS QUESTION THUS FAR BEEN RAISED DURING BRIEFINGS. DEPARTMENT SPOKESMEN HAVE IN RECENT DAYS RESPONDED TO A NUMBER OF INDIVIDUAL PRESS QUERIES AND HAVE LIMITED THEMSELVES TO GENERAL GUIDANCE (DATED 8/18) TEXT SENT YOU SEPTEL. IN ADDITION, PRESS DUTY OFFICER ON SATURDAY DID CONFIRM THAT WE HAD TAKEN ISSUE UP WITH SAG BUT THAT TO DATE NO RESPONSE HAD BEEN RECEIVED.

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PAGE 02 STATE 199098

2. YOU SHOULD ALSO BE AWARE OF ITEM WHICH RAN ON ABC EVENING NEWS AUGUST 19, WHICH, AS YOU WILL NOTE, GOES BEYOND DEPARTMENT GUIDANCE. TEXT FOLLOWS: REASONER IN INTRODUCTION: QUOTE ABC HAS LEARNED THAT SOUTH AFRICA MAY HAVE A NUCLEAR WEAPON UNQUOTE. BARRIE DUNSMORE (ABOUT HALF WAY THROUGH PROGRAM): QUOTE THE SOVIET UNION RECENTLY

ALLEGED THAT SOUTH AFRICA IS DEVELOPING ITS OWN NUCLEAR WEAPONS. AS A RESULT, THE US HAS RECENTLY UNDERTAKEN

ITS OWN INVESTIGATION. U.S. OFFICIALS HAVE TOLD ABC THAT SOUTH AFRICA HAS OR MAY BE DEVELOPING A NUCLEAR CAPABILITY.

THE U.S. DOES NOT HAVE FIRST HAND KNOWLEDGE, BUT U.S. OFFICIALS SAY THERE IS SUFFICIENT EVIDENCE TO BE VERY CONCERNED.

IN THE LAST FEW DAYS, THE U.S. HAS ASKED THE SOUTH AFRICANS TO RESPOND TO A SERIES OF SPECIFIC QUESTIONS. IT IS NOW AWAITING A RESPONSE. U.S. OFFICIALS SAY THAT IF SOUTH AFRICA DOES HAVE NUCLEAR WEAPONS, IT WOULD BE A VERY SERIOUS DEVELOPMENT .

IT WOULD ESCALATE THE CONFLICT IN THAT AREA. UNQUOTE.

3. FOLLOWING BRIEF ITEM ALSO RAN IN SUNDAY WASHINGTON POST: QUOTE THE UNITED STATES HAS ASKED SOUTH AFRICA WHETHER THERE IS TRUTH TO SOVIET REPORTS IT PLANS TO TEST A NUCLEAR BOMB, THE STATE DEPARTMENT SAID. A SPOKESMAN SAID THE INQUIRY WAS ACCOMPANIED BY A WARNING THAT ANY NUCLEAR TESTS BY SOUTH AFRICA WOULD CARRY SERIOUS IMPLICATIONS UNQUOTE. BOTH POST AND ABC ACCOUNTS GO BEYOND AUTHORIZED GUIDANCE, AND SHOULD BE ATTRIBUTED TO UNAUTHORIZED LEAKS RATHER THAN SECRET

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PAGE 03 STATE 199098

TO ANY OFFICIAL USG STATEMENT ON SUBJECT. NEW YORK SUNDAY TIMES RAN BRIEF UPI ITEM WHICH QUOTES DEPARTMENT SPOKESMAN JOHN MEDEIROS BY NAME BUT DOES NOT GO BEYOND LANGUAGE OF AUGUST 18 GUIDANCE.

4. DEPARTMENT UNAWARE OF ANY INSTANCE IN WHICH REFERENCE TO KALAHARI SITE HAS APPEARED IN PUBLIC DOMAIN. WE ARE OF COURSE WATCHING CLOSELY FOR THIS ASPECT TO SURFACE AND WILL REPORT FURTHER DEVELOPMENTS ASAP.

5. ASSUME YOU WILL REPEAT TO US TEXTS OF SIGNIFICANT ITEMS ON THIS SUBJECT WHICH APPEAR IN SOUTH AFRICAN PRESS. CHRISTOPHER

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DRAFTED BY: S/S:DANDERSON

APPROVED BY: S/S-MR. ANDERSON

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FM SECSTATE WASHDC

TO USMISSION USUN NEW YORK IMMEDIATE

S E C R E T STATE 199098

NODIS

USUN FOR AMB LEONARD

FOLLOWING REPEAT STATE 199098 SENT ACTION PRETORIA 21 AUG 77

QUOTE S E C R E T STATE 199098

NODIS

FOR THE AMBASSADOR

E.O. 11652: GDS

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UNQUOTE CHRISTOPHER

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01-Jan-1994 12:00:00 am
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: PRESS COMMENTS, NUCLEAR TESTS, NUCLEAR CAPABILITIES, CAT-B
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Sent Date: 21-Aug-1977 12:00:00 am
Decaption Date: 01-Jan-1960 12:00:00 am
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 22 May 2009
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
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Drafter: LRMACFARLAND:SAH
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
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From: STATE
Handling Restrictions: n/a
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Litigation History:
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Original Classification: SECRET
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: NODIS
Page Count: 5
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: SECRET
Previous Handling Restrictions: NODIS
Reference: 77 PRETORIA 4239
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
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Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 1533761
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: POSSIBLE SOUTH AFRICAN NUCLEAR PROGRAM; PRESS COVERAGE
TAGS: PARM, MNUC, SF
To: PRETORIA
Type: TE
vdkgvkey: odbc://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/6a80fa56-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
22 May 2009
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