

Message Text

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R 100557Z NOV 79
FM AMEMBASSY NIAMEY
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 5762

S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 02 NIAMEY 05457

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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 CONSULTATIONS. 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 APPARENTLY 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 VIOLATING 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 DISCUSSION 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. NIAMEY 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 DEPARTMENT BELATEDLY REPLIED TO A SERIES OF SPECIFIC QUESTIONS WE RAISED BY CABLE ON THIS SUBJECT, WE HAVE YET TO RECEIVE THE BASIC BRIEFING PAPERS WE HAVE REQUESTED BY CABLE AND OFFICIAL-INFORMALS.

5. WE ARE NOT CONVINCED FRENCH INTELLIGENCE ON THIS SUBJECT IS AS SENSITIVE OR AS PERSUASIVE AS PARIS AND THE DEPARTMENT BELIEVE. THE FRENCH STATE COMPANY COGEMA MANAGES BOTH OF NIGER'S URANIUM MINES. ITS EMPLOYEES WOULD HAVE TO DELIVER TO NIGERIEN AUTHORITIES, OR TO THE PURCHASER 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 NIGERIENS WITH THE EVIDENCE THAT THEY HAVE SOLD MORE URANIUM TO THE PAKISTANIS 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 APPARENTLY 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 MARSHAL'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 PROCEDURES. 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 WILLINENESS TO HOLD TECHNICAL DISCUSSIONS ON THIS SUBJECT? THIS APPEARS A GOLDEN OPPORTUNITY TO INVESTIGATE THE FACTS AS WELL AS TO SENSITIZE THE RESPONSIBLE NIGERIEN AUTHORITIES TO OUR CONCERNS ABOUT URANIUM SALES TO LIBYA AND PAKISTAN. BISHOP

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