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P/S No 10 Darwin ST

COMMENT:

CONFIDENTIAL

FM WASHINGTON

TO DESKBY 050900Z FCO

TELNO 286

OF 030030Z FEBRUARY 90

INFO PRIORITY CAPE TOWN, UKMIS NEW YORK, LUSAKA, HARARE  
INFO PRIORITY DAR ES SALAAM, NAIROBI, WINDHOEK, GABORONE  
INFO PRIORITY MASERU, MBABANE, LAGOS

*ms*

US/SOUTH AFRICA: REACTION TO DE KLERK'S SPEECH

SUMMARY

1. POSITIVE PUBLIC RESPONSE TO SPEECH, BUT ADMINISTRATION CAUTIOUS ON NEXT STEPS. INVITATION TO DE KLERK LIKELY TO BE ONLY GESTURE POSSIBLE IN IMMEDIATE FUTURE. THE ADMINISTRATION WILL PURSUE THE QUESTION OF A SUSPENSION OR MODIFICATION OF SANCTIONS, BUT RESULTS WILL TAKE TIME. BUT THEY WOULD CONTINUE TO TAKE A CONSTRUCTIVE LINE AND WELCOMED UK HELP IN PUTTING THIS ACROSS TO THE SAG.

DETAIL

2. STATE WELCOMED THE PRIME MINISTER'S STATEMENT OF 2 FEBRUARY, WHICH HAD BEEN BROUGHT TO THE PRESIDENT'S ATTENTION. THE ADMINISTRATION HAD ITSELF WELCOMED DE KLERK'S SPEECH, BUT HAD BEEN CAREFUL TO AVOID COMMITTING THE US TO SPECIFIC STEPS IN RESPONSE. STATE ISSUED THE FOLLOWING STATEMENT ON 2 FEBRUARY:

QUOTE WE APPLAUD PRESIDENT DE KLERK'S COURAGEOUS LAUNCHING OF HIS GOVERNMENT'S OFFER OF NEGOTIATIONS. THE STEPS HE ANNOUNCED IN HIS SPEECH LAY THE GROUNDWORK FOR NEGOTIATIONS TO BEGIN.

WE CALL ON ALL SOUTH AFRICAN PARTIES, INCLUDING THOSE UNBANNED BY PRESIDENT DE KLERK, TO TAKE UP THIS OFFER OF NEGOTIATIONS AND BEGIN IN EARNEST THE PROCESS OF A PEACEFUL TRANSITION TO A NON-RACIAL, DEMOCRATIC SOUTH AFRICA.

WE ALSO WELCOME PRESIDENT DE KLERK'S RECOGNITION OF THE ROLE TO BE PLAYED IN THIS PROCESS BY NELSON MANDELA. WE LOOK FORWARD TO HIS EARLY RELEASE, AS INDICATED BY THE STATE PRESIDENT. UNQUOTE

3. PRESIDENT BUSH, ASKED FOR HIS REACTIONS ABOARD AIR FORCE ONE, SAID THAT THE SPEECH WAS IMPORTANT AND VERY POSITIVE AND HE LOOKED FAVOURABLY ON IT. WHILE IT LAID OUT A NEW POLICY DIRECTION FOR SOUTH AFRICA. QUOTE I WANT TO SEE THE DEVELOPMENT NOW OF THESE POLICIES, AND I WANT TO TALK TO THE VARIOUS LEADERS INVOLVED. I AM SURE WE'LL HAVE A LOT OF DEBATE AND DISCUSSION INSIDE THE ADMINISTRATION ABOUT WHAT THE NEXT MOVE OF THE UNITED STATES OUGHT TO BE. I THINK WHEN PEOPLE MOVE IN THE RIGHT DIRECTION IT IS CERTAINLY TIMELY TO REVIEW ALL POLICY. WE WANT TO SEE THE POLICY INITIATIVE GO FORWARD AND THE RELEASE OF MANDELA. UNQUOTE. PRESSED ON THE ADMINISTRATION'S VIEW OF SANCTIONS, BUSH SAID THAT THE CAAA LAID DOWN CERTAIN CRITERIA FOR THE LIFTING OF SANCTIONS. SOME OF THESE HAD ALREADY BEEN MET, AND HE HOPED THE TIME WOULD SOON COME WHEN THEY WERE ALL FULFILLED. HE WOULD CONSULT CONGRESS AND THEY WOULD REVIEW TOGETHER WHAT STEPS COULD BE TAKEN.

4. STATE SAID THAT THIS CAUTIOUS APPROACH TO NEXT STEPS WAS

DELIBERATE. IT WOULD TAKE TIME FOR THE FULL IMPLICATIONS OF DE KLERK'S SPEECH TO SINK IN - WITHIN THE ADMINISTRATION, ON THE HILL AND IN THE MEDIA. IN THE INTERIM, THE MOST POSITIVE GESTURE THAT THE ADMINISTRATION COULD OFFER HAD ALREADY BEEN MADE - THE PRESIDENT'S INVITATION TO DE KLERK TO VISIT WASHINGTON AFTER MANDELA'S RELEASE (OUR TELNO 273 REFERS).

5. IN PRACTICAL TERMS, HOWEVER, THERE WAS A GENERAL FEELING THAT THE ADMINISTRATION WERE UNLIKELY TO ENGAGE CONGRESS ON THE QUESTION OF A SUSPENSION OR MODIFICATION OF SANCTIONS UNTIL AFTER BOTH MANDELA AND DE KLERK HAD VISITED WASHINGTON. THEIR SEPARATE VISITS COULD GIVE THE PRESIDENT THE OPPORTUNITY TO ASSESS FOR HIMSELF WHERE EACH STOOD AND HOW THEY VIEWED PROSPECTS FOR THE WAY AHEAD. THIS COULD MEAN THAT SERIOUS CONSULTATION WITH CONGRESS MIGHT BE DEFERRED UNTIL LATE SUMMER.

6. BUT BOTH STATE AND NSC WERE RELAXED ABOUT PROSPECTS FOR RAISING SANCTIONS. THIS WOULD HAPPEN, BUT WOULD INEVITABLY TAKE TIME. HOWEVER, THERE WOULD BE NO FURTHER MEASURES AND THAT WAS GOOD IN ITSELF. SANCTIONS WERE NOT A MAJOR DOMESTIC ISSUE, EVEN IN A CONGRESSIONAL ELECTION YEAR. POSITIVE DEVELOPMENTS IN SOUTH AFRICA HAD GIVEN MODERATE REPUBLICANS AND EVEN DEMOCRATS INCREASING POLITICAL COVER (SENATOR BOREN - D: OKLAHOMA - SAID TODAY THAT HE HOPED MANDELA AND DE KLERK WOULD BOTH BE ABLE TO MEET PRESIDENT BUSH IN THE US). BUT UNTIL THE MAJOR CONDITIONS IN THE CAAA WERE FULFILLED, THE ADMINISTRATION'S LEGAL CASE WAS NOT FIREPROOF. EVEN THOUGH KEY CONDITIONS HAD BEEN (OR WITH MANDELA'S RELEASE WOULD BE) MET - ON POLITICAL PRISONERS, UNBANNING OF POLITICAL ORGANISATIONS AND SAG AGREEMENT TO ENTER INTO NEGOTIATIONS - THE STATE OF EMERGENCY COULD STILL CAUSE PROBLEMS. IF IT WERE RETAINED, EG IN NATAL, THE SANCTIONS LOBBY (AND EVEN STATE'S LAWYERS) COULD ARGUE THAT THE LETTER OF THE LAW HAD NOT BEEN MET. WHILE THESE DIFFICULTIES WOULD EVENTUALLY BE OVERTAKEN BY EVENTS, THEY COULD PROLONG A ROLL-BACK OF SANCTIONS.

7. BUT THE ADMINISTRATION WOULD SAY TO THE SAG THAT, WITHIN THE CONTEXT OF THEIR DOMESTIC LEGAL RESTRICTIONS, THEY WERE TRYING TO BE POSITIVE AND WOULD QUOTE REVISIT UNQUOTE THE QUESTION OF SANCTIONS AS SOON AS THEY REASONABLY COULD. (THEY NOTED THAT THEIR STATEMENT IN PARA 2 MARKED A CHANGE IN TONE THAT HAD BEEN INITIATED BY THE SEVENTH FLOOR, WHICH WAS REMARKABLE IN ITSELF GIVEN THE CAUTION WHICH TRADITIONALLY HEDGED THE SOUTH AFRICAN ISSUE). THE US RESPONSE WOULD BE SLOWER THAN THAT OF THE UK, BUT THIS WAS TOLERABLE AS LONG AS OUR POLICIES REMAINED COMPLEMENTARY AND MUTUALLY SUPPORTIVE. THEY WOULD WELCOME OUR HELP IN MAKING THESE POINTS TO THE SAG.

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|-------------------|----|---|
| ADVANCE           | 16 |   |
| . SOUTHERN AFRICA |    | 1 |
| PS                |    | 1 |
| PS/MR WALDEGRAVE  |    | 1 |
| PS/PUS            |    | 1 |
| MR TOMKYS         |    | 1 |
| MR FAIRWEATHER    |    | 1 |
| HD/SAFD           |    | 1 |
| HD/CAFD           |    | 1 |
| HD/UND            |    | 1 |
| HD/NEWS           |    | 1 |