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INCOMING
TELEGRAM

PAGE 01 MOSCOW 24869 301630Z
ACTION SP-02

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MOSCOW 24869 301630Z

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~~GR~~
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INFO OCT-01 AF-10 EUR-12 ADS-00 OES-09 SAS-02 H-01
PA-01 SSO-00 NSCE-00 INRE-00 ICAE-00 ACDA-12
CIAE-00 INR-10 IO-14 L-03 NSAE-00 EB-08 NRC-02
DOE-00 DOE-17 SS-15 CEQ-01 PM-06 /126 W
-----078540 301634Z /53

O 301618Z OCT 79
FM AMEMBASSY MOSCOW
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 3526
INFO AMEMBASSY PRETORIA IMMEDIATE

C O N F I D E N T I A L MOSCOW 24869

E.O. 12065: RDS-1 10/30/89 (WATSON, THOMAS J.) OR-M
TAGS: TECH, MNUC, UR, SF
SUBJ: (C) SUSPECTED NUCLEAR EVENT

REF: (A) STATE 281777, (B) STATE 279936

1. (C-ENTIRE TEXT)

2. SCICOUNS MET I.G. MOROZOV, DEPUTY CHAIRMAN OF THE STATE COMMITTEE FOR THE UTILIZATION OF ATOMIC ENERGY AND SOVIET REPRESENTATIVE TO IAEA BOARD OF GOVERNORS, OCTOBER 30 TO BRIEF HIM ON THE SUSPECTED NUCLEAR EVENT IN THE SOUTH ATLANTIC. SCICOUNS DREW FROM THE BACKGROUND PRESS BRIEFING (REFTEL B) AND MADE THE SPECIFIC POINTS PROVIDED REFTEL A.

3. IN RESPONSE, MOROZOV FIRST POINTED TO THE OFFICIAL TASS ANNOUNCEMENT PRINTED IN PRAVDA OCTOBER 30 THAT "NO EXPLOSIONS, ACCIDENTS, OR ROCKET LAUNCHES FROM SOVIET SUBMARINES TOOK PLACE IN THIS REGION." THIS ANNOUNCEMENT WAS MADE, ACCORDING TO PRAVDA, IN RESPONSE TO THE FALSE REPORTS SPREAD BY SOUTH AFRICAN INFORMATION AGENCIES THAT THE SEPTEMBER 22 INCIDENT HAD RESULTED FROM AN ACCIDENT ON BOARD A SOVIET NUCLEAR SUBMARINE. MOROZOV ALSO WAS PUZZLED THAT THE US HAD OBTAINED NO CORROBORATING INFORMATION BY OTHER MEANS, AIR SAMPLES AND SEISMIC DATA, FOR EXAMPLE. SCICOUNS SPECIFICALLY STATED THAT THE STATEMENT IN THE OCTOBER 30 PRAVDA PIECE THAT "AMERICAN TECHNICAL SERVICES HAD ESTABLISHED THROUGH COLLECTION OF AIR SAMPLES THAT RADIOACTIVITY IS PRESENT IN THE REGION OF THE EXPLOSION" WAS FALSE AS FAR AS EMBASSY KNEW (THAT IS, AS OF THE OCTOBER 26 BACKGROUNDER) AND THAT WE WERE CONTINUING TO ANALYZE ALL INFORMATION AVAILABLE TO US.

4. MOROZOV SAID THAT HE DID NOT HAVE ACCESS TO SOVIET MEANS OF VERIFYING THE NATURE OF THE SEPTEMBER 22 INCIDENT. HE PROMISED IMMEDIATELY TO PASS ON THE US REQUEST FOR INFORMATION TO THE MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS. (SCICOUNS HAS MEETING SCHEDULED WITH B.P. PROKOF'YEV, DEPUTY CHIEF OF THE INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATION DEPARTMENT AT MFA, ON OCTOBER 31). MOROZOV EXPRESSED APPRECIATION FOR THE BRIEFING AND ASKED TO BE KEPT INFORMED OF FURTHER ANALYSIS OF US DATA.

5. MOROZOV THEN REVIEWED HIS OWN CONTACTS WITH US POLICY-MAKERS ON THE SOUTH AFRICAN NUCLEAR ISSUE OVER THE PAST 14 MONTHS. HE RECALLED AMBASSADOR SMITH'S RELATIVELY OPTIMISTIC ASSESSMENT IN SEPTEMBER 1978 AT THE IAEA AND THE SOMEWHAT LESS OPTIMISTIC VIEWS OF ASSISTANT SECRETARY PICKERING DURING HIS FEBRUARY 1979 VISIT TO MOSCOW. HE ASSERTED THAT IF AN EXPLOSION HAS INDEED TAKEN PLACE, THERE IS A NEED TO TAKE VERY ENERGETIC MEASURES NOT TO LET THE SITUATION DEVELOP FURTHER. HE EXPRESSED CONCERN THAT ANY EXPLOSION WOULD HAVE VERY SERIOUS CONSEQUENCES FOR THE NEXT IAEA BOARD OF GOVERNORS MEETING IN NEW DELHI IN DECEMBER. IF THE INVOLVEMENT OF OTHER COUNTRIES IN ADDITION TO SOUTH AFRICA IS ESTABLISHED (APPARENTLY AN INDIRECT REFERENCE TO PRESS REPORTS ABOUT POSSIBLE

ISRAELI INVOLVEMENT), THIS COULD VERY SERIOUSLY UNDERMINE THE NON-PROLIFERATION TREATY.
6. MOROZOV SAID HE SUSPECTED THAT VELA SIGNAL WAS CORRECT AND THAT AN ATOMIC EXPLOSION HAD TAKEN PLACE. HE ELIMINATED USA, USSR, UK OR FRANCE AS COUNTRIES WHICH MIGHT HAVE SET OFF NUCLEAR EXPLOSION. HE SAID HE DIDN'T THINK CHINA OR INDIA WOULD CHOOSE THAT PART OF THE WORLD FOR A TEST. HE FELT SOUTH AFRICA WAS THE LIKELY CULPRIT. HE COULD NOT UNDERSTAND WHY US HAD NOT, IMMEDIATELY UPON RECEIVING THE VELA SIGNAL ON SEPTEMBER 22, LAUNCHED EFFORTS TO COLLECT CORROBORATIVE EVIDENCE. US HAD SENSITIVE SEISMIC NETWORK (MOROZOV AIDE PUSTYNTSEV CREDITED NETWORK WITH CAPABILITY OF DETECTING EXPLOSIONS OF ONE KILOTON); WHY DID NOT US SIMPLY UNROLL ITS MANY SEISMIC RECORDS FOR THAT DATE? HE IMPLIED US HAD NOT BEEN ANXIOUS TO FIND CORROBORATIVE EVIDENCE.
7. SCICOUNS REPLIED BY STATING US HAD SOUGHT OTHER EVIDENCE, BUT WITHOUT SUCCESS. HE READ STATEMENTS TO MOROZOV ABOUT US-USSR COMMON INTEREST IN GETTING SOUTH AFRICA TO ADHERE TO NPT AND ABOUT NEED FOR A NON-POLEMICAL APPROACH.
8. MOROZOV REPLIED WITH RUSSIAN PROVERB, GIST OF WHICH WAS THAT US DID NOT SEEM ALL THAT SERIOUS ABOUT FINDING OUT WHETHER AN EXPLOSION HAD TAKEN PLACE. HE ALSO SAID THAT HE HAD READ REPORTS "FROM LESS THAN RELIABLE SOURCES" THAT US DATA INDICATED YIELD WAS IN THE 2 1/2 TO 4 KILOTON RANGE. SCICOUNS SAID US DATA NOT ALL THAT PRECISE, BUT REITERATED US DESIRE RECEIVE ANY INFORMATION THAT SOVIET NATIONAL MEANS OF DETECTION MIGHT PROVIDE REGARDING WHAT HAPPENED ON SEPTEMBER 22.
WATSON

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