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DESKBY 011100Z

FM TRIPOLI 011005Z JUNE 82

TO IMMEDIATE FCO

TELEGRAM NUMBER 158 OF 1 JUNE

NY TELNO 157: LIBYA/ARGENTINA

1. A BRITISH PILOT WITNESSED ON 31 MAY THE ARRIVAL OF A BOEING 707 AIRLINER IN CIVIL LIVERY, CALL SIGN ARGENTINA 1420, AT TRIPOLI AIRPORT. HE THEN SAW IT PARK IN THE MILITARY AREA.
2. THE PILOT WAS SUBSEQUENTLY TOLD BY A SWEDISH SOURCE THAT THE AIRCRAFT LOADED 400 ERM MISSILES. HE DESCRIBED THE SWED AS A MISSILE EXPERT EMPLOYED BY THE LIBYAN AIR FORCE TO TRAIN LIBYANS ON THE ERM WHICH HE ASSUMED TO BE A SWEDISH MISSILE. THE SWED HAD TOLD HIM THAT THE MISSILE WAS A QUOTE MINI EXOCET UNQUOTE WITH A DIAMETER OF 23 CENTIMETRES. THE SWED WHO WAS DESCRIBED AS PRO-BRITISH AND MUCH CONCERNED THAT THE LEAK SHOULD NOT BE TRACED TO HIM, WAS CALLED TO THE AIRPORT AFTER DARK TO ASSIST IN THE LOADING.
3. I HAVE HAD A SIMILAR, THOUGH EXPANDED, REPORT FROM MY GERMAN COLLEAGUE. ALTHOUGH HE WOULD NOT REVEAL HIS SOURCE I BELIEVE IT TO HAVE BEEN THE SAME SWED. ACCORDING TO THE GERMAN TWO AIRCRAFT CAME YESTERDAY AND LOADED 400 G(SIC)RM MISSILES. THE GERMAN'S SOURCE HAD TOLD HIM THAT THESE MISSILES ARE MANUFACTURED IN LIBYA AT A FACTORY BUILT BY A SWEDISH COMPANY FOR THE MILITARY INDUSTRIAL OFFICE AT AIN ZAHRA, 30KM SOUTH EAST OF TRIPOLI. THE AREA IS SEALED OFF AND THERE IS PARTICULAR CARE TO KEEP SOVIET NATIONALS AWAY.
4. THE GERMAN SAID THAT HE HAD BEEN TOLD THAT THE MISSILE HAD A RANGE OF 3KM, WAS ESSENTIALLY A SURFACE TO SURFACE MISSILE WHICH COULD "AIM ITSELF". BUT IT COULD BE CARRIED BY AIRCRAFT AND WAS SUITABLE FOR ONE OF THE TYPES OF AIRCRAFT IN THE ARGENTINE AIR FORCE. IT COULD ALSO BE ADAPTED TO HELICOPTERS.
5. ACCORDING TO THE GERMAN THE MISSILE IS GOOD TECHNICALLY WITH A CLAIMED SUCCESS RATE OF 90 PER CENT. ITS ONLY PROBLEM IS SAID TO BE THAT WHEN TRAVELLING CLOSE TO THE SEA REFLECTED LIGHT CAN AFFECT ITS ACCURACY.

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6. THE GERMAN SEEMED TO BE UNDER THE IMPRESSION THAT ALTHOUGH THE SWEDISH FIRM HAD CONSTRUCTED THE FACTORY, THE MISSILE PARTS WERE OBTAINED FROM VARIOUS SOURCES AND THE END PRODUCT ASSEMBLED HERE.
7. I CAN TRACE NO REFERENCE IN MY OUTDATED JANE'S AND APOLOGISE FOR THE AMATEUR DESCRIPTION OF MISSILE DETAILS. I REPORT THEM AS DESCRIBED TO ME.

BURTON

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