

South Africa

GRS 280
UNCLASSIFIED
FM CAPE TOWN EMBASSY 271110Z JAN 83
TO IMMEDIATE F C O
TELEGRAM NUMBER 18 OF 27 JANUARY
AND TO IMMEDIATE MODUK (DI 4) AND PRETORIA

ESPIONAGE IN SOUTH AFRICA

1. AT A SPECIALLY CONVENED NEWS CONFERENCE ON 26 JANUARY THE SOUTH AFRICAN PRIME MINISTER ANNOUNCED THAT THE COMMANDER OF THE SIMONSTOWN NAVAL BASE, COMMODORE DIETER GERHARDT, AND HIS WIFE HAD BEEN ARRESTED IN CONNECTION WITH ALLEGED ESPIONAGE ACTIVITIES. MR BOTHA CONFIRMED IN ANSWER TO QUESTIONS THAT GERHARDT HAD BEEN WORKING ON BEHALF OF THE SOVIET UNION BUT DECLINED TO GO INTO FURTHER DETAILS. HE SAID THAT INVESTIGATIONS WERE CONTINUING AND ALL THE EVIDENCE AND FACTS WOULD BE SUBMITTED TO THE ATTORNEY GENERAL AS SOON AS POSSIBLE.

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2. GERHARDT IS 47 AND WAS BORN IN BERLIN. HE CAME TO SOUTH AFRICA AS A CHILD WITH HIS PARENTS AFTER THE SECOND WORLD WAR. ACCORDING TO PRESS REPORTS HIS CAREER INCLUDED FOUR YEARS AT THE ROYAL COLLEGE OF MARINE ENGINEERING AT MANADON NEAR PLYMOUTH.

3. THE ANNOUNCEMENT PROMPTED DIE BURGER TODAY (27 JANUARY) TO COMMENT THAT THE DETENTION OF GERHARDT WAS ANOTHER QUOTE FEATHER IN THE CAP OF THE SOUTH AFRICAN INTELLIGENCE COMMUNITY UNQUOTE FOLLOWING THE UNCOVERING OF DR DE CRESPIGNY. THE DIE BURGER ARTICLE ALSO SPECULATED THAT THE ARREST OF GERHARDT WAS THE POSSIBLE ENDING OF A QUOTE RUSSIAN COMMUNICATION LINE PRESUMABLY INSIDE SENIOR PLANNING SECTORS OF THE SADF UNQUOTE. SOME OBSERVERS HAD THOUGHT FOR A CONSIDERABLE TIME THAT SWAPO HAD DEVELOPED THE ABILITY TO GET ADVANCE INFORMATION ABOUT SADF ACTIONS IN SOUTH ANGOLA, FOR EXAMPLE THE ARTICLE CLAIMED THAT SWAPO UNITS HAD ESCAPED OPERATION DAISY IN NOVEMBER 1981 AS A RESULT OF INFORMATION RECEIVED SHORTLY BEFORE THE OPERATION TOOK PLACE.

FERGUSON

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