

South Africa

CONFIDENTIAL

GRS 310  
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FM CAPE TOWN 041215Z FEB 83  
TO PRIORITY FCO  
TELEGRAM NUMBER 38 OF 4 FEBRUARY  
AND TO ROUTINE LUANDA WASHINGTON UKMIS NEW YORK JOHANNESBURG  
PRETORIA

*me*

NEW DIRECTOR-GENERAL OF THE SABC

1. THE CHAIRMAN OF THE SOUTH AFRICAN BROADCASTING CORPORATION ANNOUNCED ON 2 FEBRUARY THAT RIAN EKSTEEN WILL TAKE OVER FROM THE CURRENT DIRECTOR-GENERAL OF THE SABC WHO RETIRES AT THE END OF THIS YEAR. EKSTEEN'S APPOINTMENT IS A SURPRISE. HE IS A CAREER DIPLOMAT AND A FORMER SOUTH AFRICAN AMBASSADOR AT THE UN. HE HAS BEEN THE SENIOR OFFICIAL IN PRETORIA RESPONSIBLE FOR NAMIBIAN POLICY AND A KEY FIGURE SINCE BRAND FOURIE LEFT THE DFAI LAST YEAR ON APPOINTMENT AS SOUTH AFRICAN AMBASSADOR IN WASHINGTON (ALTHOUGH FOURIE IS STILL CONSULTED ON ALL POLICY DECISIONS).

2. PIK BOTHA TOLD ME LAST NIGHT THAT IT HAD BEEN EKSTEEN'S PERSONAL DECISION TO ACCEPT THE JOB AND THAT HE REGRETTED EKSTEEN'S DEPARTURE. THE TIMING OF THE ANNOUNCEMENT, WHILE EKSTEEN IS STILL ENGAGED IN TRYING TO SET UP THE NEXT ROUND OF SOUTH AFRICA/ANGOLA TALKS, IS DUE TO PRESS SPECULATION ABOUT THE NEW APPOINTMENT. PARLIAMENTARY QUESTIONS HAVE BEEN PUT DOWN ABOUT SKELETONS IN THE SABC CUPBOARD. THE GOVERNMENT AND THE BOARD OF SABC DECIDED THAT IT WOULD BE EASIER TO MAKE THE ANNOUNCEMENT NOW RATHER THAN TO FACE MOUNTING PRESSURE ABOUT THE APPOINTMENT. IT IS NOT CLEAR WHEN EKSTEEN WILL MOVE FROM HIS PRESENT DUTIES. HOWEVER, HIS SUCCESSOR IS TO BE DAVID STEWART, EKSTEEN'S SUCCESSOR IN NEW YORK, WHO HAS JUST RETURNED TO SOUTH AFRICA AND IS NOW UNDERSTUDYING EKSTEEN AT THE DFAI.

3. EKSTEEN'S MOVE WILL DEPRIVE THE DFAI NAMIBIA TEAM OF A VERY EXPERIENCED NEGOTIATOR. STEWART'S RECORD IN NEW YORK DOES NOT SUGGEST THAT THE CHANGE WILL BE FOR THE BETTER.

4. PIK BOTHA ADDED THAT WE SHOULD NOT EXAGGERATE THE EFFECTS OF EKSTEEN'S DEPARTURE. HE WAS ABLE BUT HE DID NOT HAVE THE INFLUENCE OVER POLICY DECISIONS WHICH BRAND FOURIE STILL VERY CLEARLY RETAINED.

FERGUSSON

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SOUTHERN AFRICA  
STANDARD  
S AF D  
OADS  
MCAD  
UND  
NAD  
WED  
ECD  
ES & SD  
CABINET OFFICE  
MRSQUAEE

( Repetition to LUANDA  
referred for departmental decision,  
repeated as requested to other posts. )

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