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ACTION EUR-00

INFO LOG-00 COPY-01 ADS-00 INR-10 SS-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00
H-01 NEA-06 NSCE-00 NSAE-00 SSO-00 HA-09 L-03
PM-10 PA-01 OMB-01 INRE-00 ACDA-12 SP-02 SNP-01
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FM AMEMBASSY VIENNA
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 3727
INFO AMEMBASSY LONDON
AMEMBASSY PARIS
AMEMBASSY BONN
AMEMBASSY MADRID
AMEMBASSY ROME
AMEMBASSY BERN
AMEMBASSY ATHENS
AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV
AMEMBASSY CAIRO
USMISSION USNATO
USIA WASHDC 9587
USDEL MBFR VIENNA

C O N F I D E N T I A L VIENNA 05740

E.O. 12356: DECL:OADR
TAGS: PGOV, PREL, AU, LY
SUBJECT: U.S. STRIKE AGAINST LIBYA: AUSTRIAN REACTION

1. (C) BOTH OFFICIAL AND PUBLIC AUSTRIAN REACTION IN THESE FIRST HOURS TO THE U.S. STRIKE AGAINST LIBYA HAS NOT BEEN FAVORABLE. AUSTRIAN TV SPECIAL ON THIS EVENT SUGGESTS THAT THERE MAY HAVE BEEN CIVILIAN CASUALTIES, FURTHER EXACERBATING AUSTRIAN DISTRESS WITH THE USE OF FORCE IN SETTling ANY DISPUTE. CHANCELLOR SINOWATZ STATED AFTER THE AUSTRIAN CABINET MEETING TODAY (APRIL 15) THAT "MILITARY ACTIONS COULD NEVER SOLVE
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PROBLEMS." THE OPPOSITION PEOPLE'S PARTY SECRETARY GENERAL, MICHAEL GRAFF, ALSO NOTED TODAY, AS WELL, THAT WHILE HE UNDERSTOOD THAT COLONEL QADHAFI TRIGGERED ABHORRENCE, HE WAS ALSO CONCERNED THAT THE U.S. WAS

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LASTLY, FM GRATZ ISSUED A FORMAL PRESS ANNOUNCEMENT WHICH WE UNDERSTAND FROM HIS CHEF DE CABINET (MINISTER SUCHARIPA/PROTECT) IS MORE BALANCED THAN HIS PRIVATE SENTIMENTS.

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2. (U) GRATZ' PRESS STATEMENT IS AS FOLLOWS:

- THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT HAS ALREADY IN THE PAST EXPRESSED ITS DEEPEST CONCERN ABOUT THE GROWTH OF TENSIONS IN THE WESTERN MEDITERRANEAN AND THE RESULTING DANGERS OF AN ESCALATION. THE AMERICAN MILITARY ACTIONS AGAINST TARGETS IN TRIPOLI AND BENGHAZI SHOW IN A TERRIFYING MANNER HOW WELL-FOUNDED THESE CONCERNS HAVE BEEN. THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT IS CONVINCED THAT ONE MUST STRIVE FOR METHODS OTHER THAN THE APPLICATION OF MILITARY FORCE IN THE SOLVING OF DIFFERENCES. EXPERIENCE HAS SHOWN THAT SUCH METHODS DO NOT LEAD TO SOLUTIONS OF PROBLEMS AND TO A RELAXATION (OF TENSIONS), BUT ONLY CREATE NEW TENSIONS AND DANGERS.

- WITHOUT PREJUDICE TO ITS CATEGORIC CONDEMNATION OF ANY TYPE OF TERRORISM, THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT EXPECTS THE RETURN TO PEACEFUL MEANS FOR THE SETTLEMENT OF CONFLICTS, SINCE ONLY THEREBY CAN FURTHER USE OF FORCE BE AVOIDED.

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3. (C) SUCHARIPA RELATED THAT THIS MORE BALANCED PUBLIC CONFIDENTIAL

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POSTURE WAS INDUCED BY HIMSELF AND OTHERS BY POINTING OUT TO THE FM THAT THE U.S. CONGRESS AS WELL AS THE AMERICAN PEOPLE SUPPORTED THE PRESIDENT'S DECISION. THEY WERE ABLE TO CONVINCED THE FM THAT A LESS BALANCED STATEMENT WOULD INCUR UNNECESSARY POLITICAL COSTS. BUT AT THE SAME TIME, SUCHARIPA POINTED OUT THERE WAS DEEP AND GENUINE CONCERN THAT THE U.S. ACTION NOT LEAD TO AN ESCALATING CYCLE OF VIOLENCE. WHEN WE NOTED LONG-STANDING LIBYAN TERRORISM -- WHICH HAD GONE UNANSWERED, INCLUDING THE MOST RECENT TERRORIST ACTS, AND ASKED HOW THE AUSTRIANS WOULD HAVE RESPONDED, HE DEMURRED. AT THE SAME TIME, HE REPEATED THAT WHATEVER THE SOLUTION MIGHT BE, THE AUSTRIANS COULD NOT CONSIDER THE BOMBING OF LIBYA AS LEADING TO A DE-ESCALATION OF TERRORISM OR A CONTRIBUTION TO PEACEFUL RESOLUTION OF PROBLEMS.

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