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ACTION EUR-00

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FM AMEMBASSY LONDON
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 4752
INFO AMEMBASSY MOSCOW PRIORITY
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AMEMBASSY CAIRO
AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS
AMEMBASSY RABAT
AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV
AMEMBASSY TUNIS

C O N F I D E N T I A L LONDON 08026

E.O.12356: DECL: OADR
TAGS: PREL, UK, UR
SUBJECT: ANGLO-SOVIET RELATIONS SO FAR UNAFFECTED BY
- BRITISH SUPPORT FOR U.S. STRIKES ON LIBYA

REF: MOSCOW 6485

1. CONFIDENTIAL - ENTIRE TEXT.
2. SUMMARY: ANGLO-SOVIET RELATIONS HAVE THUS FAR NOT BEEN AFFECTED BY BRITISH BACKING OF U.S. AIR STRIKES
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AGAINST LIBYA. NO SCHEDULED EVENTS, INCLUDING NST NEGOTIATOR KARPOV'S APRIL 17 TALKS IN LONDON, HAVE BEEN CANCELLED. THE UNCERTAIN STATUS OF SHEVARDNADZE'S VISIT TO LONDON, EXPECTED IN EARLY SUMMER, IS

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3. AS OF APRIL 16, THE SOVIETS HAVE TAKEN NO ACTION AGAINST THE UK IN RESPONSE TO BRITISH AUTHORIZATION FOR THE USAF'S USE OF BASES IN BRITAIN TO LAUNCH AIR STRIKES AGAINST LIBYA. SOVIET CHIEF NUCLEAR AND SPACE ARMS NEGOTIATOR VIKTOR KARPOV, DUE TO ARRIVE APRIL 17 IN LONDON FOR TALKS, HAS NOT CANCELLED HIS VISIT (THE FCO NOTES THAT, SINCE KARPOV'S VISIT HAS NOT YET BEEN PUBLICIZED, THE SOVIETS WOULD GET LITTLE MILEAGE FROM ITS CANCELLATION). NONE OF THE PLANNED UK-SOVIET REGIONAL CONSULTATIONS OR OTHER SCHEDULED EVENTS HAS BEEN CALLED OFF. IN FACT, THE SOVIET EMBASSY HAS NOT EVEN GOTTEN AROUND TO DELIVERING A FORMAL PROTEST TO THE FCO--ALTHOUGH THE BRITS DO EXPECT ONE EVENTUALLY.

4. DEPARTING SOVIET AMBASSADOR VIKTOR POPOV, IN HIS FAREWELL CALL ON FOREIGN SECRETARY HOWE ON APRIL 15, FAILED TO SAY ANYTHING MORE SPECIFIC ABOUT THE ATTACK AND BRITAIN'S ROLE THAN TO OPINE THAT ARMS CONTROL BECOMES EVEN MORE IMPORTANT DURING TIMES OF TENSION, ESPECIALLY IN THE MEDITERRANEAN. HOWE LEFT THE MEETING SEVERAL TIMES TO RECEIVE PHONE CALLS, INCLUDING ONE FROM SECRETARY SHULTZ. POPOV, HOWEVER, CHARACTERISTICALLY FAILED TO SEIZE THE INITIATIVE (AS ONE FCO COLLEAGUE PUT IT, IN HIS TIME HERE POPOV "NEVER SWITCHED ON, AND NOW HE'S REALLY SWITCHED OFF"). WHEN MOSCOW INSTRUCTIONS COME IN, THE BRITS EXPECT POPOV'S DCM, GERMAN GVENTSADZE, WILL DELIVER THE OBLIGATORY
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5. AS WE HAVE PREVIOUSLY REPORTED, THE BRITISH INVITATION TO SHEVARDNADZE TO VISIT LONDON REMAINS OPEN. THE VISIT, ONCE EXPECTED DURING THE SPRING, HAS NOW SLIPPED TO EARLY SUMMER. THE FCO IS STILL WAITING FOR THE SOVIETS TO SUGGEST A SPECIFIC TIMEFRAME, BUT HAVE HEARD NOTHING IN RECENT WEEKS.

6. BRITISH ANALYSIS OF SOVIET MOTIVES BEHIND CANCELLING THE SHULTZ-SHEVARDNADZE MEETING CLOSELY PARALLELS EMBASSY MOSCOW'S (PARA 6 REFTTEL): THAT THE SOVIETS NEEDED AN ADEQUATELY TOUGH RESPONSE IN SUPPORT OF A CLIENT STATE THAT THEY HAD FAILED TO BACK IN MATERIAL TERMS. THE FCO AGREES THAT THE SOVIET CANCELLATION

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