

SECRET  
FM WASHINGTON  
TO IMMEDIATE FCO  
TELNO 694  
OF 240010Z MARCH 90  
AND TO IMMEDIATE MOSCOW  
INFO PRIORITY CSCE POSTS

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## LITHUANIA

### SUMMARY

1. SOME ADMINISTRATION CONCERN THAT MOSCOW MAY BE PREPARING MILITARY ACTION IN LITHUANIA OVER THE WEEKEND.

### DETAIL

2. WE HAVE DISCUSSED THE TRAVEL RESTRICTIONS REPORTED IN MOSCOW TELNO 500 WITH STATE. THEY HAVE EXPRESSED CONSIDERABLE CONCERN ABOUT THE IMPLICATIONS. THIS AFTERNOON 23 MARCH THE PRESIDENT'S PRESS SPOKESMAN ISSUED A STATEMENT WHICH DESCRIBED THE RESTRICTIONS AS ADDING TO THE ADMINISTRATIONS CONCERN AND SAID THAT THE US HAD PROTESTED. THIS FOLLOWED A STATEMENT BY THE PRESIDENT EARLIER TODAY IN WHICH HE WARNED AGAINST ANY ATTEMPT TO COERCE OR INTIMIDATE OR FORCEABLY INTERVENE AGAINST LITHUANIA. HE REPEATED THAT THE ADMINISTRATION HAD MADE CLEAR TO THE SOVIET UNION THAT THE SITUATION COULD ONLY BE RESOLVED PEACEFULLY.

3. MEANWHILE, THE CIA HAVE TOLD US THAT THE SITUATION IN LITHUANIA MAY BE REACHING A CRITICAL POINT AND MOSCOW MAY BE PREPARING SOME KIND OF MILITARY INTERVENTION OVER THE WEEKEND.

THEY BASE THIS ASSESSMENT IN PART ON DEVELOPMENTS OVER THE LAST FEW DAYS, IN PART ON THE DEADLINE WHICH EXPIRES ON 24 MARCH FOR LITHUANIAN DESERTERS TO RETURN TO THEIR SOVIET MILITARY UNITS, IN PART ON A PUBLIC STATEMENT BY LANDBERGIS CLAIMING THAT HE BELIEVED THAT THE SOVIET UNION WOULD INVADE ON 24 MARCH, AND IN PART ON THE ORDER TO FOREIGN DIPLOMATS TO GET OUT. THE CIA BELIEVE THAT EXISTING SOVIET FORCES IN LITHUANIA COULD CONDUCT A LIMITED INTERVENTION WITHOUT WARNING. THE AIM WOULD BE TO OCCUPY KEY BUILDINGS, INCLUDING THE PARLIAMENT, AND COMMUNICATIONS AND POWER FACILITIES.

4. INR AND THE OFFICE OF SOVIET AFFAIRS AT STATE ARE BOTH LESS ALARMIST ABOUT THE IMMEDIATE PROSPECTS THAN CIA APPEAR TO BE. BUT THEY RECOGNISE THAT ATTEMPTS THIS WEEKEND TO IMPLEMENT THE ORDER TO LITHUANIAN DESERTERS TO

RETURN TO THEIR SOVIET MILITARY UNITS OR THE DECREE FOR LITHUANIAN TO SURRENDER THEIR WEAPONS COULD TRIGGER AN INCIDENT WHICH COULD GET OUT OF CONTROL.

5. EITHER WAY, THE ADMINISTRATION ARE PREPARING TO RESPOND TO THE WORST, ALTHOUGH HOPING THAT BOTH SIDES WILL STILL HAVE THE SENSE TO BACK DOWN. EVEN IF THERE IS NO MILITARY INTERVENTION THIS WEEKEND, THE MOOD IN WASHINGTON HAS HARDENED AND THE ADMINISTRATION ARE WORKING ON WAYS IN WHICH TO MAKE CLEAR THEIR DISPLEASURE AT SOVIET BEHAVIOUR IN LITHUANIA. IDEAS WHICH HAVE SO FAR BEEN MENTIONED INCLUDE A PRESIDENTIAL LETTER TO GORBACHEV, CALLING FOR A CSCE INSPECTION OF SOVIET FORCES IN LITHUANIA, CANCELLING PLANNED VISITS (EG BY THE US ARMY CHIEF OF STAFF), AND PERHAPS EVEN POSTPONING THE NEXT BAKER/SHEVARDNADZE MINISTERIAL IN APRIL.

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