

CONFIDENTIAL  
FM WASHINGTON  
TO DESKBY 310900Z FCO  
TELNO 752  
OF 310115Z MARCH 90  
INFO IMMEDIATE MOSCOW  
INFO PRIORITY PARIS, BONN, UKDEL NATO, HELSINKI, STOCKHOLM  
INFO PRIORITY WARSAW

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LITHUANIA: PRESIDENT BUSH'S MESSAGE TO GORBACHEV

## SUMMARY

1. BUSH MESSAGE TO GORBACHEV URGES RESTRAINT, WARNS OF SERIOUS CONSEQUENCES FOR US/SOVIET RELATIONS IF FORCE IS USED AND COMMENDS THE IDEA OF HOLDING A REFERENDUM IN LITHUANIA.

## DETAIL

2. CONTACTS AT THE NSC AND STATE HAVE TOLD US THAT BUSH'S MESSAGE TO GORBACHEV URGES RESTRAINT AND WARNS OF THE SERIOUS CONSEQUENCES FOR US/SOVIET RELATIONS, AND EAST/WEST RELATIONS, IF MOSCOW RESORTS TO FORCE. THE ONE NEW ELEMENT IS THAT IT COMMENDS THE IDEA OF HOLDING A REFERENDUM IN LITHUANIA, BUT DOES NOT SPECIFY DETAILS, SUCH AS WHETHER THIS WOULD BE ON THE TERMS ENVISAGED IN THE NEW SOVIET SECESSION LAW. NSC (BLACKWILL) STRESSED THAT IT WAS A VERY PERSONAL MESSAGE, EXPRESSING SYMPATHY WITH GORBACHEV'S DILEMMA. WHEN IT WAS HANDED OVER SHEVARDNADZE SAID HE RECOGNISED THAT THE US WAS NOT TRYING TO COMPLICATE MATTERS.

3. THE CONTENTS OF THE LETTER ARE BEING CLOSELY GUARDED HERE. AT THE PRESS BRIEFING ON 30 MARCH, WHITE HOUSE SPOKESMAN (FITZWATER) DECLINED TO GIVE DETAILS SAYING SIMPLY THAT THE LETTER REAFFIRMED THE US POSITION. HE SAID THE US SUPPORTED THE ASPIRATIONS OF THE LITHUANIAN PEOPLE FOR SELF-DETERMINATION, AND HAD EXPRESSED THE VIEW THAT THE ONLY WAY TO RESOLVE THE CONFLICT WAS THROUGH PEACEFUL DIALOGUE. THIS HAD BEEN MADE ABUNDANTLY CLEAR TO BOTH PARTIES.

4. IN RESPONSE TO QUESTIONS, FITZWATER SAID A NUMBER OF FACTORS PERSUADED THE PRESIDENT TO SEND THE MESSAGE. THESE INCLUDED THE

PRIME MINISTER'S 'PHONE CALL: BUSH'S CONVERSATIONS WITH SENATOR KENNEDY: THE AMERICAN ANALYSIS OF THE SITUATION: AND DISCUSSIONS BETWEEN BAKER AND SHEVARDNADZE. HE SAID THAT BUSH WANTED TO SEND A PERSONAL MESSAGE THAT GORBACHEV WOULD KNOW CAME DIRECTLY FROM HIM. THE PRESIDENT FELT A PERSONAL MESSAGE WOULD BE USEFUL IN MAKING CERTAIN THERE WAS NO MISUNDERSTANDING.

5. THE PRESIDENT'S LETTER FOLLOWS AN EARLIER MESSAGE FROM BAKER TO SHEVARDNADZE SENT AFTER BAKER'S RETURN FROM NAMIBIA WHICH WELCOMED SHEVARDNADZE'S ASSURANCES THAT FORCE WOULD NOT BE USED. AT TODAY'S PRESS CONFERENCE, JOURNALISTS SPECULATED THAT BUSH'S MESSAGE WAS PROMPTED BY SHEVARDNADZE'S FAILURE TO RESPOND TO BAKER'S. OFFICIALS TO WHOM WE HAVE SPOKEN DENIED ANY CONNECTION.

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