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TO IMMEDIATE PRETORIA
TELEGRAM NUMBER 1052 OF 8 JULY 1982

MY TELNO 1039: ARMS SUPPLIES FOR ARGENTINA

1. MINISTER OF SOUTH AFRICAN EMBASSY CALLED TODAY ON SIR J LEAHY TO DELIVER FURTHER RESPONSE TO ALLEGATIONS OF SOUTH AFRICAN INVOLVEMENT IN ARMS SUPPLIES TO ARGENTINA (INCLUDING REPORT IN TUR). IN VIEW OF THE IMPORTANCE OF THIS ISSUE, SAG WERE PREPARED TO MAKE A FURTHER EXCEPTION TO THEIR POLICY OF REFUSING TO COMMENT ON ARMS SALES: 'THE SOUTH AFRICAN GOVERNMENT HAS NOT DELIVERED ANY WEAPONS TO ARGENTINA' SINCE THE OUTBREAK OF HOSTILITIES IN THE FALKLANDS. VAN NIEKERK SAID THAT BECAUSE OF THE RISK OF UPSETTING THEIR REGULAR ARMS CUSTOMERS, THIS ASSURANCE MUST BE BOTH VERBAL AND CONFIDENTIAL.

2. LEAHY THANKED VAN NIEKERK FOR THIS FURTHER ASSURANCE, EXPLAINING THAT WE HAD NOT SOUGHT TO SINGLE OUT SOUTH AFRICA OR ACCUSE HER OF SUPPLYING ARMS, BUT HAD BEEN OBLIGED AT A TIME OF CRISIS TO FOLLOW UP ALL SUCH REPORTS WITH MANY GOVERNMENTS.

3. IT WAS AGREED THAT THE NEED FOR CONFIDENTIALITY PRECLUDED ANY PUBLIC REFERENCE TO THIS LATEST ASSURANCE AND THAT IF THERE WAS A NEED TO COMMENT ON ALLEGATIONS OF SOUTH AFRICAN GOVERNMENT INVOLVEMENT, DIRECT OR INDIRECT, IN ARMS SUPPLIES, WE WOULD NOT GO BEYOND SAYING 'WE HAVE RECEIVED ADDITIONAL (TO MALAWI'S STATEMENT OF 24 MAY) CLARIFICATIONS.'

4. COUNSELLOR SUBSEQUENTLY CONFIRMED THAT GOVERNMENT AGENCIES WERE INCLUDED IN THIS CLARIFICATION.

5. ALLEGATIONS OF INDIRECT SOUTH AFRICAN INVOLVEMENT SUCH AS

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TRANS-SHIPMENT OR DEALING ARE PRESUMABLY NOT COVERED BY IT, NOR THE SUPPLY OF ITEMS SUCH AS AMMUNITION, COMMUNICATIONS EQUIPMENT AND OTHER WAR MATERIALS. DESPITE THESE LIMITATIONS THIS ASSURANCE SUGGESTS THE SOUTH AFRICANS ARE WELL AWARE OF THE DAMAGE THAT THEIR PREVIOUS UNHELPFUL RESPONSE HAS DONE TO THEIR IMAGE HERE AND THAT THEY WISH TO DO WHAT THEY CAN TO MEND FENCES.

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