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TO PRIORITY FCO

TELEGRAM NUMBER 260 OF 23 OCTOBER

INFO ROUTINE ALL EC POSTS, BERNE, WASHINGTON, UKMIS NEW YORK

YOUR TELNO 033 TO ATHENS : FALKLANDS DEBATE.

SUMMARY

1. OFFICIALS IN THE BELGIAN FOREIGN MINISTRY HAVE SAID THAT BELGIUM WILL PROBABLY AGAIN ABSTAIN IN THIS YEAR'S FALKLANDS DEBATE AT THE UN.

DETAIL

2. VAN OVERBERGHE, THE NEW HEAD OF THE LATIN AMERICAN DEPARTMENT, AND DE MEULENAERE IN THE UN DEPARTMENT AT THE MFA HAVE TOLD US THAT THE BELGIAN AMBASSADOR TO THE UN (PLEASE PROTECT) HAD RECOMMENDED THAT BELGIUM SHOULD AGAIN ABSTAIN. VAN OVERBERGHE SAID THAT HE HAD SUPPORTED THIS RECOMMENDATION, COMMENTING THAT IT WAS IN FACT THE GENERAL VIEW IN THE MINISTRY THAT IT WOULD BE WRONG FOR BELGIUM TO CHANGE TACK AT THIS STAGE. HE RECOGNISED THAT WHATEVER THE IMPROVEMENTS IN THE TONE OF THE LATEST DRAFT (WHICH THE MFA HAS SEEN) IT REMAINED FLAWED. IT STILL CONCENTRATED ON SOVEREIGNTY. VAN OVERBERGHE TOOK THE POINT THAT THE ARGENTINE PERCEPTION OF NEGOTIATIONS, WHICH HAD AS AN INESCAPABLE CONCLUSION A HAND-OVER TO ARGENTINA IN A SHORT TIME SCALE, WAS NOT ACCEPTABLE. MORE IMPORTANTLY, HE NOTED THAT THE DRAFT IGNORED THE PRINCIPLE OF SELF-DETERMINATION. NOTHING OF SUBSTANCE HAD THEREFORE CHANGED.

3. MINISTERS STILL HAVE TO TAKE THE FINAL DECISION AND WE SHOULD NOT THEREFORE ASSUME THAT BELGIAN SUPPORT IS TOTALLY IN THE BAG. THE VIEWS OF OTHER EC PARTNERS WILL CONTINUE TO CARRY WEIGHT WITH THEM. BUT THE PROSPECTS FOR A BELGIAN ABSTENTION NOW LOOK GOOD.

COLTMAN

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