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FM WASHINGTON 132347Z JANUARY 81  
TO ROUTINE FCO  
TELEGRAM NUMBER 119 OF 13 JANUARY  
INFO PARIS, BONN, UKDEL NATO, MOSCOW, CAIRO (FOR PS/SOFS)  
INFO SAVING ALL OTHER EEC POSTS, ANKARA, LISBON, OTTAWA,  
OSLO, REYKJAVIK, UKMIS NEW YORK, HMCN NEW YORK.

MY TELNO 87: CONFIRMATION HEARINGS ON ALEXANDER HAIG.

1. HAIG HAS NOW UNDERGONE NEARLY 30 HOURS OF QUESTIONING AT HIS CONFIRMATION HEARINGS IN THE SENATE FOREIGN RELATIONS COMMITTEE, INCLUDING FOUR HOURS OF CONFIDENTIAL TESTIMONY LAST NIGHT. ALTHOUGH HAIG HAS REPLIED CAUTIOUSLY ON SENSITIVE ISSUES, HE HAS HAD LITTLE TROUBLE DEALING WITH THE COMMITTEE, MOST OF WHOM (THE CHAIRMAN, SENATOR PERCY, IN PARTICULAR) HAVE BEEN UNIMPRESSIVE. AN EDITORIAL IN TODAY'S NEW YORK TIMES, RECOMMENDING THAT HIS NOMINATION BE APPROVED, DESCRIBES HAIG AS HAVING BEEN QUOTE TOUGH AND FLEXIBLE, ARTICULATE AND FUZZY, DEVIOUS AND DIRECT: A SECRETARY OF STATE UNQUOTE.

2. WE ARE REPORTING SEPARATELY HAIG'S REPLIES TO QUESTIONS OF INTEREST. HE HAS FOLLOWED THE MAIN LINES OF HIS OPENING STATEMENT (MY TELEGRAM UNDER REFERENCE), WITH REPEATED EMPHASIS ON THE NEED TO COUNTER THE THREAT OF INCREASED SOVIET MILITARY POWER AND THE ASSERTION THAT DECISIONS DESIGNED TO ACHIEVE A DRAMATIC IMPROVEMENT IN U.S. DEFENCE CAPABILITIES SHOULD BE TAKEN BEFORE EMBARKING ON NEW ARMS CONTROL NEGOTIATIONS WITH THE SOVIET UNION. BUT SOME OF HIS ANSWERS WILL NOT HAVE PLEASED THE REPUBLICAN RIGHT WING. HE HAS DECLARED HIS SUPPORT FOR THE PANAMA CANAL TREATIES, ENDORSED THE ZIMBABWE SETTLEMENT (SAYING THAT HE HAD DISCUSSED IT AT LENGTH WITH YOU), REAFFIRMED HIS SUPPORT FOR THE STRENGTHENING OF RELATIONS WITH CHINA AND DECLINED TO COMMIT HIMSELF TO THE REPUBLICAN PLATFORM ON THE GROUNDS THAT HE HAD NO PART IN DRAFTING IT.

3. HAIG HAS OCCASIONALLY RUN INTO TROUBLE. UNDER PRESSURE FROM SENATOR HELMS, HE HAS HAD TO AGREE TO GIVE THE REPUBLICAN PLATFORM QUOTE THE GREATEST WEIGHT UNQUOTE. UNDER CLOSE QUESTIONING FROM SENATOR TSONGAS (D MASSACHUSETTS) HE HAD TO ADMIT THAT U.S. INTERFERENCE IN CHILE AT THE TIME OF ALLENDE WAS A BREACH OF THE SPIRIT OF THE OAS CHARTER, THOUGH HE ATTEMPTED TO JUSTIFY IT BY REFERENCE TO U.S. INTERESTS OVERALL IN THE CIRCUMSTANCES AT THE TIME.

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4. THESE PROBLEMS HAVE HOWEVER, BEEN INSIGNIFICANT COMPARED WITH THE BATTLE THAT IS DEVELOPING OVER THE WATERGATE TAPES. UNDER PRESSURE FROM THE DEMOCRATIC MINORITY, SENATOR PERCY HAS SIGNED A SUBPOENA ORDERING THE NATIONAL ARCHIVES TO PRODUCE THE INDEX AND LOG OF TAPED CONVERSATIONS BETWEEN PRESIDENT NIXON AND GENERAL HAIG AT THE HEIGHT OF THE WATERGATE SCANDAL ( MAY-JULY 1973 ). IT SEEMS LIKELY THAT NIXON'S LAWYERS MAY GO TO COURT TO BLOCK RELEASE OF THE LOG WHICH COVERS OVER 100 HOURS OF RECORDINGS. THE SENATE FOREIGN RELATIONS COMMITTEE COULD THEN FIND ITSELF IN A LEGAL WRANGLE WITH NIXON WHICH COULD LAST A VERY LONG TIME. AND EVEN IF THEY OBTAIN THE LOG, TRANSCRIPTION OF THE TAPES WOULD TAKE SEVERAL MONTHS, ACCORDING TO THE NATIONAL ARCHIVIST.

5. THE REPUBLICANS (WHO NOW HAVE A BUILT-IN MAJORITY ON THE COMMITTEE) ARE DETERMINED TO COME TO A VOTE ON HAIG'S NOMINATION NO LATER THAN WEDNESDAY, 14 JANUARY. THE DEMOCRATS ARE EQUALLY DETERMINED THAT, PENDING THE OUTCOME ON THE TAPES, THE FILE ON HAIG'S NOMINATION SHOULD NOT BE CLOSED EVEN IF THEY VOTE TO CONFIRM HIM. THIS RAISES VARIOUS QUESTIONS ABOUT WHETHER THE SENATE, HAVING APPROVED HAIG'S NOMINATION, COULD SUBSEQUENTLY REOPEN THE CASE. IN PRACTICE, OF COURSE, THE BATTLE OVER THE TAPES WOULD, AS REPUBLICAN SENATOR LUGAR PUT IT, BE A SWORD OF DAMOCLES HANGING OVER HAIG AND COULD HAVE SOME EFFECT ON HIS PERFORMANCE AS SECRETARY OF STATE. EVEN IF HAIG DID NOT ACT ILLEGALLY AT THE TIME OF WATERGATE THE TAPES MAY SHOW, ACCORDING TO TODAY'S NEW YORK TIMES, THAT HE HELPED PRESIDENT NIXON TO "STONEWALL THE LAW", PROBABLY WITHOUT HIMSELF BREAKING IT. THE PRESS (AND PARTICULARLY THE WASHINGTON POST WHICH HAS OPPOSED HAIG'S NOMINATION AND IS CONSTANTLY TRYING TO RELIVE THE SUCCESS OF ITS WATERGATE REVELATIONS) CAN BE EXPECTED TO PURSUE THE ISSUE.

FCO PASS SAVING ANKARA, LISBON, OTTAWA, OSLO, REYKJAVIK, ATHENS, BRUSSELS, COPENHAGEN, DUBLIN, LUXEMBOURG, ROME, THE HAGUE, UKREP BRUSSELS.

HENDERSON

FCO/WHITEHALL  
NAD

[REPEATED AS REQUESTED]  
[THIS TELEGRAM WAS NOT ADVANCED]