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INFO IMMEDIATE ISLAMABAD, MOSCOW, KABUL, NEW DELHI, UKMIS NEW YORK,
INFO IMMEDIATE PARIS, RIYADH, ROME, UKMIS GENEVA, CABINET OFFICE

CABINET OFFICE FOR ASSESSMENT STAFF

MIPT AND FCO TELNO 138 TO ISLAMABAD: AFGHANISTAN

SUMMARY

1. PRELIMINARY US REACTIONS TO GORBACHEV'S TASS STATEMENT.

DETAIL

2. STATE DEPARTMENT SPOKESMAN MADE THE FOLLOWING STATEMENT ON
8 FEBRUARY ABOUT GORBACHEV'S TASS STATEMENT ON AFGHANISTAN:

QUOTE THE ESTABLISHMENT OF AN ACCEPTABLE TIMETABLE FOR SOVIET
TROOP WITHDRAWAL HAS BEEN A KEY REQUIREMENT FOR FORWARD
PROGRESS IN THE GENEVA PROCESS, AND WE WELCOME GORBACHEV'S
APPARENT WILLINGNESS TO ADDRESS THIS QUESTION. NATURALLY
WE'LL WANT TO SEE FURTHER DETAILS ON THE GORBACHEV OFFER
AND CONSULT WITH THE PAKISTANIS ON THIS MATTER. AS BOTH
WE AND THE PAKISTANIS HAVE MADE CLEAR, THERE ARE A NUMBER
OF IMPORTANT DETAILS OF ANY TIMETABLE FOR SOVIET TROOP
WITHDRAWAL, WHICH MUST BE CONSIDERED IN WEIGHING ITS
ACCEPTABILITY. ONE KEY TO ANY REALISTIC AND LASTING
SETTLEMENT IN AFGHANISTAN INVOLVES ITS ACCEPTABILITY TO
THE MILLIONS OF REFUGEES IN PAKISTAN AND ELSEWHERE, WHO
HAVE BEEN DRIVEN FROM THEIR HOMES BY THIS WAR.

THE PRIMARY US GOALS REMAIN THE RAPID AND COMPLETE WITH-
DRAWAL OF SOVIET TROOPS IN AFGHANISTAN, AND THE
IMPLEMENTATION OF GENUINE SELF-DETERMINATION BY THE AFGHAN
PEOPLE. WE WILL BE CAREFULLY ASSESSING THE LATEST SOVIET
OFFER TO JUDGE THE EXTENT TO WHICH IT CONTRIBUTES TO THESE
GOALS. MEANWHILE, WE WILL REMAIN REALISTIC ABOUT THE
COMPLEXITIES WHICH ANY COMPREHENSIVE SETTLEMENT MUST
CONTEND WITH. UNQUOTE

3. THE WHITE HOUSE SPOKESMAN (ACCOMPANYING THE PRESIDENT TO
NORTH CAROLINA) IS REPORTED TO HAVE SAID QUOTE IT
SOUNDS LIKE A POSITIVE STEP AND WE HOPE IT IS BUT WE NEED TO
SEE THE FINE PRINT (TO SEE IF THERE ARE ANY CONDITIONS). WE'VE
GOT TO KNOW WHAT IT MEANS. UNQUOTE.

4. FLATEN (STATE DEPARTMENT AFGHANISTAN OFFICE DIRECTOR) TOLD

US ON 8 FEBRUARY THAT THESE STATEMENTS HAD BEEN NO MORE THAN HOLDING RESPONSES. THE ADMINISTRATION HAD SINCE BEEN ABLE TO CONSIDER GORBACHEV'S PROPOSAL MORE FULLY AND THE PRESS GUIDANCE FOR 9 FEBRUARY WAS LIKELY TO BE SLIGHTLY MORE WELCOMING. PRIVATELY, THE ADMINISTRATION HAD BEEN QUOTE CONSIDERABLY ENCOURAGED UNQUOTE: FOR GORBACHEV TO PUT HIS NAME TO A DEFINITIVE STATEMENT SUCH AS THIS ABOUT WITHDRAWAL WOULD BE AN UNUSUAL STEP TO TAKE, IF THE RUSSIANS WERE ACTING WHOLLY CYNICALLY. THE US WOULD HOWEVER BE LOOKING HARD AT THE FINE PRINT AND CONTINUE TO KEEP THE FOCUS ON THE NEED FOR A SATISFACTORILY DETAILED SOVIET WITHDRAWAL PROPOSAL AT GENEVA.

5. FLATEN SAID IT WAS ALSO ENCOURAGING THAT VORONTOV (NOW IN NEW DELHI) WAS FINALLY TO VISIT ISLAMABAD ON 10-13 FEBRUARY. GORBACHEV'S STATEMENT WAS OBVIOUSLY INTENDED TO SET THE BASIS FOR VORONTOV'S TALKS WITH THE PAKISTANIS.

6. FLATEN SAID THAT, IN VIEW OF US-PAKISTANI TACTICAL DIFFERENCES (SEE MIPT) THE US WOULD HAVE TO RESPOND WITH PARTICULAR CAUTION TO THE PASSAGE IN GORBACHEV'S STATEMENT CRITICISING INTERFERENCE IN NATIONAL RECONCILIATION AND THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A COALITION GOVERNMENT. FLATEN POINTED PARTICULARLY TO GORBACHEV'S PHRASE QUOTE IT IS NONE OF OUR BUSINESS. OR YOURS ... UNQUOTE. THIS WAS CLEARLY AIMED AT PAKISTAN. IN RESPONDING, THE US DID NOT WANT TO EXPOSE ANY GAP BETWEEN THEMSELVES AND PAKISTAN TO SOVIET WEDGE-DRIVING.

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