SECRET

PAGE 01  GEORGE 03783  01 OF 04  151637Z

INFO OCT-01  ADS-00  SSO-00 /031 W
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P R 151243Z AUG 80
FM AMEMBASSY GEORGETOWN
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 3215
INFO AMEMBASSY BRIDGETOWN
AMEMBASSY CARACAS
AMEMBASSY KINGSTON
AMEMBASSY LONDON
AMEMBASSY OTTAWA
AMEMBASSY PARAMARIBO
AMEMBASSY PORT OF SPAIN
AMCONSUL MARTINIQUE
AMCONSUL TORONTO

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E.O. 12065: RDS-4 8/13/2000 (ROBERTS, GEORGE B.) OR-M
TAGS: PEPR, PINT, EAID, GY
SUBJ: RODNEY DEATH - THE CASE AGAINST THE GOG

1. (S) SUMMARY: CIRCUMSTANTIAL EVIDENCE HAS COME TO THE
ATTENTION OF EMBASSY GEORGETOWN WHICH INDICATES THAT THE
GOVERNMENT OF GUYANA IS IMPLICATED IN THE KILLING OF WALTER
RODNEY. THE HURRIED GOG-ASSISTED DEPARTURE OF MATERIAL
WITNESSES AND THE NATURE OF THE BOMB FRAGMENTS AT THE
SCENE OF THE DEATH ARE THE MOST TELLING INDICATORS OF
OFFICIAL INVOLVEMENT. THE EMBASSY BELIEVES THAT WITH GUYANA'S
FORTHCOMING ELECTIONS IN MIND, WE SHOULD AVOID PUBLIC
IDENTIFICATION WITH THE GOG, WE SHOULD DELAY ANY NEW
AID PROJECTS, AND WE SHOULD INCLUDE THE ISSUE IN OUR 1980 HUMAN
RIGHTS REPORT ON GUYANA. END SUMMARY.

SECRET

PAGE 02  GEORGE 03783  01 OF 04  151637Z

2. (S) INFORMATION HAS COME TO EMBASSY GEORGETOWN'S
ATTENTION SINCE THE JUNE 13 DEATH BY EXPLOSION OF
GUYANESE OPPOSITION LEADER WALTER RODNEY WHICH LEADS
TO THE STRONG PRESUMPTION THAT THE GOVERNMENT OF GUYANA
IS IMPLICATED IN THE KILLING. MOST OF THIS INFORMATION
HAS ALREADY BEEN REPORTED TO THE DEPARTMENT, BUT IT
SEEMS USEFUL TO PULL IT TOGETHER, PRESENT THE CASE,
AND RECOMMEND AN APPROPRIATE U.S. COURSE OF ACTION
WHICH WILL TAKE INTO ACCOUNT THE FORTHCOMING GUYANESE
ELECTIONS.
3. (U) BACKGROUND.
A. (S) IN THE COURSE OF A CONVERSATION WITH ME ON FEBRUARY 6, GUYANESE PRIME MINISTER FORBES BURNHAM SAID THAT RODNEY'S POLITICAL PARTY, THE WORKING PEOPLE'S ALLIANCE (WPA), ACCEPTED THE USE OF VIOLENCE. BURNHAM ADDED THAT IF THE WPA SHOULD USE VIOLENCE, HE WOULD BE VERY FIRM. "AND IF I AM FIRM, AMBASSADOR, I DO NOT WANT ANY LECTURES FROM YOU ON HUMAN RIGHTS" (GEORGETOWN 0574, PARA 21).
B. (S) LAST DECEMBER, RODNEY INDICATED TO THE EMBASSY'S POLITICAL OFFICER THAT HE WAS CONTEMPLATING THE USE OF VIOLENCE AND THAT HE HAD PREMONITIONS OF HIS OWN VIOLENT DEATH (79 GEORGETOWN 5483). IN A CONVERSATION WITH ME ON JANUARY 15, HOWEVER, RODNEY DID NOT DIRECTLY MENTION THE POSSIBILITY OF THE USE OF VIOLENCE BY THE WPA, THOUGH HE DID SAY HIS PARTY MIGHT HAVE TO GO UNDERGROUND (GEORGETOWN 0274).
C. (S) ON FEBRUARY 19, AN ALLEGED WPA ACTIVIST, DAVID HINDS, WAS ARRESTED AT GUYANA'S TIMEHRI INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT AND CHARGED WITH ATTEMPTING TO SMUGGLE WEAPONS INTO THE COUNTRY (GEORGETOWN 828). (THERE ARE REPORTS THAT HINDS WAS A GOG PLANT. IF SO, THE INCIDENT IN-
SECRET

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PAGE 03 GEORGE 03783 01 OF 04 151637Z

VOLVING HIM IS STILL GERMANE AND PERHAPS EVEN MORE SIGNIFICANT.)

D. (U) SUBSEQUENTLY, THE GUYANESE GOVERNMENT ANNOUNCED THAT INCIDENTS OF SABOTAGE HAD TAKEN PLACE ON SUGAR ESTATES. THE GOG MAINTAINED THAT THERE WAS A "PLOT" TO UNDERMINE THE COUNTRY'S ECONOMY AND DESTABILIZE ITS POLITICS (GEORGETOWN 2539, 2599, 2627, 2695, AND 3269).

4. (U) RODNEY'S DEATH.
A. (U) ON JUNE 13, WALTER RODNEY WAS KILLED BY AN EXPLOSION WHILE SITTING IN A CAR PARKED NEAR THE GEORGETOWN PRISON. HIS BROTHER, DONALD RODNEY, WHO WAS WITH HIM IN THE CAR AT THE TIME, SAID THAT RODNEY WAS IN THE PROCESS OF TESTING A WALKIE-TALKIE RADIO WHICH HAD BEEN GIVEN TO HIM BY ONE GREGORY SMITH. ACCORDING TO DONALD RODNEY, SMITH HAD IDENTIFIED HIMSELF TO THE WPA AS AN EX-SERGEANT IN THE GUYANA DEFENSE FORCE, WELL-VerSED I

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PAGE 01 GEORGE 03783 02 OF 04 151754Z
ACTION SS-30

INFO OCT-01 ADS-00 SSO-00 /031 W
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P R 151243Z AUG 80
FM AMEMBASSY GEORGETOWN
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 3216
INFO AMEMBASSY BRIDGETOWN
AMEMBASSY CARACAS
AMEMBASSY KINGSTON
AMEMBASSY LONDON
AMEMBASSY OTTAWA
AMEMBASSY PARAMARIBO
AMEMBASSY PORT OF SPAIN
AMCONSUL MARTINIQUE
AMCONSUL TORONTO

SECRET SECTION 2 OF 4 GEORGETOWN 3783

EXDIS

ELECTRONICS, WHO WOULD BE ABLE TO ASSIST THE WPA IN COMMUNICATIONS AND OTHER TECNICAL MATTERS (GEORGETOWN
2781 AND 2989).

5. (U) EVENTS FOLLOWING THE DEATH.
A. (U) THE GOVERNMENT TOOK THE LINE THAT DONALD RODNEY
WAS LYING: BOTH HE AND HIS LATE BROTHER KNEW THAT THEY
HAD A BOMB, THE WALKIE-TALKIE STORY WAS A FABRICATION.
AND THERE WAS NOT SUCH PERSON AS EX-SERGEANT GREGORY
SMITH. DONALD RODNEY WAS ARRESTED AND CHARGED WITH
THE POSSESSION OF EXPLOSIVES (GEORGETOWN 2902).
B. (U) THE CATHOLIC STANDARD, AN OPPOSITION WEEKLY NEWSPAPER, MAINTAINED THAT THERE HAD BEEN A GREGORY SMITH
ON GDF ROLLS, BUT HE WAS ONLY AN ACTING SERGEANT AND
PERMANENT CORPORAL. ACCORDING TO THE STANDARD, THE
GDF DENIAL THAT THERE WAS A SERGEANT SMITH WAS THUS
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PAGE 02 GEORGE 03783 02 OF 04 151754Z

TECHNICALLY ACCURATE BUT WAS AN OBVIOUS EFFORT TO MIS-
LEAD THOSE TRYING TO INVESTIGATE RODNEY'S DEATH
(GEORGETOWN 2989).
C. (LOU) THE CATHOLIC STANDARD FURTHER REPORTED THAT
ONE JOAN MELVILLE OR MELVIN, A CLOSER ASSOCIATE OF SMITH,
HAD BEEN HURRIEDLY TRANSFERRED FROM THE MINISTRY OF
HEALTH TO THE MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS AND EQUALLY
HURRIEDLY TRANSFERRED OUT OF THE COUNTRY TO THE
GYANESE CONSULATE IN TORONTO. A CHECK OF EMBASSY
GEORGETOWN'S VISA FILES INDICATED THAT A JOAN MELVIN,
WITH THE SAME ADDRESS AND DATE OF BIRTH OF EX-SERGEANT SMITH'S PURPORTED FRIEND, HAD BEEN TRANSFERRED TO THE MFA IN JUNE AND GRANTED A U.S. VISA AS A RESULT OF A GUYANESE FOREIGN MINISTRY NOTE STATING THAT SHE WISHED TO TRANSIT THE UNITED STATES ON THE WAY TO HER NEW ASSIGNMENT IN TORONTO (GEOGETOWN 3236). D. (S) AN EMBASSY SOURCE TOLD US JULY 23 THAT A FRIEND OF HIS IN THE SHRIMP BUSINESS HAD BEEN APPROACHED BY QDF CHIEF OF STAFF BRIGADIER NORMAN MCLEAN ASKING THE FRIEND'S ASSISTANCE IN EMPLOYING A PERSON WAS APPARENTLY EX-SERGEANT SMITH IN CAYENNE. THE FRIEND, WILLIAM CHARRON (PARAMARIBO 1439) SAID THAT UNKNOWN TO THE OWNER OF THE SHRIMP COMPANY, SMITH NOW WORKING FOR THE CAYENNE FIRM (GEOGETOWN 3454). E. (S) ALSO ON JULY 23, BURNHAM DENIED TO ME THAT THE GOG HAD KILLED RODNEY AND POINTED OUT THAT HIS GOVERNMENT HAD NO INTEREST IN MAKING A MARTYR. NEVERTHELESS, BURNHAM COMMENTED THAT RODNEY HAD BEEN ENGAGED IN ILLEGAL ACTIVITY, SINCE EVEN IF HE HAD HAD A WALKIE-TALKIE, AS DONALD RODNEY HAD CLAIMED, SUCH EQUIPMENT WAS ILLEGAL. BURNHAM ALSO CLAIMED, THAT RODNEY HAD WANTED TO OBTAIN EXPLOSIVES. IN A SOMEWHAT STRAINED SIMILE, BURNHAM POINTED OUT THAT A PERSON WO PROVIDED SECRET.

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PAGE 01  GEORGE 03783  03 OF 04  151735Z
ACTION SS-30

INFO OCT-01 ADS-00 SSO-00 /031 W
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TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 3217
INFO AMEMBASSY BRIDGETOWN
AMEMBASSY CARACAS
AMEMBASSY KINGSTON
AMEMBASSY LONDON
AMEMBASSY OTTAWA
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AMEMBASSY PORT OF SPAIN
AMCONSUL MARTINIQUE
AMCONSUL TORONTO

SECRET SECTION 3 OF 4 GEORGETOWN 3783

EXDIS

IN FEBRUARY SHOW A PROPENSITY FOR VIOLENT ACTION
AGAINST THE WFA, AND BURNHAM'S STATEMENTS AFTER THE
INCIDENT SHOW A DESIRE TO RATIONALIZE WHAT HAPPENED.
B. (S) THE EMBASSY IS THUS CERTAIN THAT BURNHAM'S GOVERN-
MENT IS INVOLVED IN A COVER-UP AND NINETY PERCENT CERTAIN
THAT THE GOG IS IMPLICATED IN THE KILLING
OF WALTER RODNEY. PART OF THE REMAINING TEN PERCENT
OF DOUBT CENTERS AROUND THE IDENTITY AND PRESENT
LOCATION OF EX-SERGEANT SMITH. IN ADDITION, WE DO
NOT KNOW WHETHER RODNEY DIED AS THE RESULT OF A
CONSCIOUS PLAN DEVELOPED AT A HIGH LEVEL IN THE GOG
OR WHETHER LOWER-LEVEL OFFICIALS OVER-REACTED TO SENIOR-
LEVEL IRRIGATION WITH RODNEY.

7. (U) U.S. RESPONSE,
A. (S) THE GOG IS NEITHER THE FIRST NOR THE LAST REGIME
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PAGE 02  GEORGE 03783  03 OF 04  151735Z
TO BE IMPLICATED IN MURDER. NEITHER IS IT THE FIRST
NOR THE LAST REGIME ASSOCIATED IN THE PUBLIC EYE WITH
THE U.S. TO BE SO IMPLICATED. THERE HAS BEEN AND WILL
PROBABLY CONTINUE TO BE FAR LESS POLITICAL VIOLENCE
HERE THAN IN BOLIVIA OR, FOR THAT MATTER, IN JAMAICA.
NEVERTHELESS, AS DISCUSSED IN GEORGETOWN 3550 THERE
WOULD NOT APPEAR TO BE A LOT TO GAIN AT THE PRESENT
TIME IN FOLLOWING A POLICY WHICH ASSOCIATES US TOO
CLOSELY WITH THE GOG. THERE IS ALSO THE CONSIDERATION
THAT AN OVERLY FRIENDLY OR EVEN NORMAL STANCE TOWARD
BURNHAM'S GUYANA COULD FEED THE SUSPICION THAT WE WERE
SOMEHOW INVOLVED IN RODNEY'S DEATH. WE DID, FOR
EXAMPLE, GIVE MS. MELVILLE/MELVIN A VISA (ALBEIT
UNKNOWINGLY AND EVEN THOUGH WE PRESUME SHE IS NOW IN
CANADA), AND THE CAYENNE SHRIMPING FIRM, SAHLMAN, FOR
WHICH SMITH IS REPORTEDLY WORKING, IS AN AMERICAN
COMPANY.
B. (S) AN OBVIOUS MOVE ON OUR PART WOULD BE TO IN-
CLUDE AS MUCH AS POSSIBLE OF WHAT WE KNOW OF THE
KILLING IN OUR FORTHCOMING HUMAN RIGHTS REPORT. WE
WILL HAVE TO TABLE SUSPICIONS AS ONLY SUSPICIONS, AND
WE WILL HAVE TO BE CAREFUL NOT TO GO BEYOND WHAT CAN
BE REASONABLE ESTABLISHED. IT WOULD BE USEFUL
IF WE COULD GET A FIRM FIX ON THE CURRENT WHEREABOUTS
OF SMITH AND MELVILLE/MELVIN (PERHAPS MARTINIQUE AND
TORONTO COULD HELP). IN THIS CONNECTION, SMITH IS
SAID TO HAVE USED THE NAME WILLIAM PETER SMITH AS WELL
AS GREGORY SMITH.
C. (S) OUR HUMAN RIGHTS REPORT WOULD BE MUCH MORE CON-
VINCING IF WE COULD OBTAIN A COPY OF THE BOMB EXPERT'S
REPORT WHICH WE COULD OPENLY CITE. ON AUGUST 12, WE
ASKED THE PERMANENT SECRETARY IN THE GUYANESE MINISTRY
OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS IF WE COULD BE PROVIDED WITH A COPY
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PAGE 03   GEORGE 03783   03 OF 04   151735Z

OF THE REPORT. WE REMINDED THE PERMANENT SECRETARY OF
THE BACKGROUND ON THE GOG'S REQUEST TO US AND THE
BRITISH FOR EXPERT OUTSIDE ASSISTANCE. WE HAD TURNED
THE REQUEST DOWN SINCE WE WERE BEING ACCUSED OF COM-
PLICITY IN THE INCIDENT (GEORGETOWN 2755, STATE 180217,
AND GEORGETOWN 2787). SINCE WE WERE STILL BEING SUB-
JECTED TO ACCUSATIONS, WE ASKED IF WE MIGHT BE PROVIDED
WITH COPIES OF THE BRITISH BOMB AND FORENSIC REPORTS.
(WE DID NOT TELL HIM WE ALREADY HAD BOTH.) THE
PERMANENT SECRETARY IMMEDIATELY ACKNOWLEDGED OUR
LEGITIMATE INTEREST IN SEEING THE DOCUMENTS AND SAID
THAT HE WOULD TRY TO OBTAIN COPIES FOR US FROM THE
POLICE. IF HE IS SUCCESSFUL, WE WILL NOT BE RESTRICTED
IN OUR ABILITY TO USE THE INFORMATION WE ALREADY HAVE.
BURNHAM WILL NOT LIKE BEING "LECTURED" AS HE SAID TO
ME ON FEBRUARY 6, BUT IF OUR 1980 GUYANA HUMAN RIGHTS
REPORT IS TO HAVE ANY CREDIBILITY, WE CANNOT OVERLOOK

UNCLASSIFIED U.S. Department of State Case No. M-2013-15063 Doc No. C06511130 Date: 03/14/2018
THE RODNEY CASE.
D. (S) THE HUMAN RIGHTS REPORT WILL NOT BE PUBLISHED,
HOWEVER, UNTIL AT LEAST JANUARY, WITH GUYANA'S ELECTIONS
NOW RUMORED TO BE SET FOR OCTOBER, WE CAN EXPECT THAT
IN THE VERY NEAR FUTURE WE WILL BE SUBJECTED TO A
BROAD EFFORT BY THE GOG TO DRAW US INTO A POSITION OF
APPARENT SUPPORT FOR BURNHAM'S PNC. I HAVE BEEN IN-
VITED, FOR EXAMPLE, TO APPEAR WITH ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT
MINISTER HOYTE AT AN AUGUST 17 RIBBON-CUTTING CEREMONY
AT PORT MOURANT (CHEDDI JAGAN'S HOME TOWN) FOR A USAID
SPECIAL DEVELOPMENT FUND PROJECT. WITH ELECTIONS ON

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PAGE 01  GEORGE 03783  04 OF 04  151754Z
ACTION SS-30

INFO OCT-01 ADS-00 SSO-00 /031 W
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FM AMEMBASSY GEORGETOWN
TO SECESTAGEWASHDC PRIORITY 3218
INFO AMEMBASSY BRIDGETOWN
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AMEMBASSY PORT OF SPAIN
AMCONSUL MARTINIQUE
AMCONSUL TORONTO

SECRET SECTION 4 OF 4 GEORGETOWN 3783

EXDIS

THE WAY AND WITH THE STRONG POSSIBILITY THAT THEY MIGHT
BE RIGGED, I WOULD NORMALLY BE CAREFUL ABOUT SUCH AN
APPEARANCE. KNOWING WHAT WE NOW KNOW ABOUT THE RODNEY
INCIDENT, HOWEVER, I THINK IT WOULD BE UNWISE FOR ME TO
APPEAR ON THE SAME PLATFORM AT THIS TIME WITH A GUYANESE
GOVERNMENT MINISTER.
E. (S) IN ADDITION, THERE IS THE OPTION OF NOT SIGNING ANY
NEW AID COMMITMENTS. BUDGETARY PROBLEMS WITH THE
FOREIGN ASSISTANCE ACT APPEAR TO BE MAKING THIS NECESSARY
ANYWAY, BUT PERHAPS WE CAN TURN THIS NECESSITY TO OUR
ADVANTAGE BY DELAYING SIGNING THE AGRICULTURAL CREDIT
PROJECT (WHICH BURNHAM VERY MUCH WANTS). I HAVE ASKED OUR USAID STAFF TO PROCEED WITH THE INTERNAL ARRANGEMENTS NECESSARY TO PREPARE THIS LOAN FOR SIGNATURE IN FY 80 SINCE IT IS ALWAYS POSSIBLE THAT THERE COULD BE A SATISFACTORY EXPLANATION FOR THE CIRCUMSTANTIAL CASE AGAINST THE GOG.

SECRET

PAGE 02  GEORGE 03783  04 OF 04  151754Z

F. (S) THERE ARE RISKS IN THIS THREE-FOLD COURSE OF ACTION. THE GUYANESE ECONOMY IS SHAKY, AND A SLOWDOWN IN AID COULD DO SOME DAMAGE. HOWEVER, THE RECENTLY CONCLUDED IMF AGREEMENT (GEORGETOWN 3558) CAN CUSHION THE ECONOMIC SHOCK IN THE SHORT RUN, EVEN THOUGH THE EFFECT OF AID DELAYS COULD UNDERMINE SOME OF THE ASSUMPTIONS ON WHICH THE IMF PROGRAM AND THE PROGRAMS OF OTHER DONORS ARE BASED. ANOTHER RISK IS THE POSSIBILITY THAT CHEDDI JAGAN'S PPP, WHICH IS STILL THE BEST ORGANIZED ALTERNATIVE TO BURNHAM'S PNC, COULD MAKE POLITICAL CAPITAL OUT OF OUR ACTIONS. JAGAN IS STILL UNACCEPTABLE TO US, AND HE DID NOTHING TO CHANGE THIS ESTIMATE IN HIS AUGUST 5 CONVERSATION WITH ME (GEORGETOWN 3623). ON THE OTHER HAND, JAGAN AND THE PPP HAVE LOST SO MUCH CREDIBILITY IN RECENT YEARS THERE IS SOME DOUBT THEY COULD WIN AN ELECTION EVEN IF BURNHAM WERE WEAKENED AND EVEN IF THE PNC DID NOT RIGH THE POLLS.

G. (S) IN SUM, THEN, A REFUSAL TO ASSOCIATE OURSELVES PUBLICLY WITH THE GOG, A DELAY IN SIGNING THE NEW AGRICULTURAL CREDIT PROJECT, AND A FRANK JUMAN RIGHTS REPORT WOULD SEEM TO BE THE BEST INITIAL RESPONSE TO THE RODNEY MURDER AS WELL AS TO THE POSSIBILITY OF RIGGED ELECTIONS. WE CAN ALSO LET IT BE KNOWN THAT IT WILL BE DIFFICULT TO SPEAK ENTHUSIASTICALLY TO PROSPECTIVE PRIVATE INVESTORS IN THE UPPER MAZARUNI AS LONG AS THE GOG'S HUMAN RIGHTS PERFORMANCE CONTINUES TO DETERIORATE. THERE ARE RISKS, BUT JAGAN'S WEAKNESS AND THE IMF'S MONEY WILL COVER OUR FLANKS TO SOME EXTENT. IN ANY EVENT, THE RISKS ARE LESS THAN THE RISKS WHICH WOULD ATTEND OUR PROCEEDING WITH BUSINESS AS USUAL KNOWING WHAT WE NOW KNOW ABOUT THE DEATH OF WALTER RODNEY.

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PAGE 03  GEORGE 03783  04 OF 04  151754Z

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