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FM AMEMBASSY MOSCOW
TO SECSTATE WASHDC NIACT IMMEDIATE 9571

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NODIS CHEROKEE

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E.O. 11652: XGOS-3,4
TAGS: ASEC, US, UR
SUBJ: MOSCOW SIGNAL

REF: MOSCOW 1696, MOSCOW 1756

1. QUESTIONING AND SPECULATION WITHIN EMBASSY AS RESULT
CALLING BRIEFING AND THEN CANCELLING WITHOUT EXPLANATION
CONTINUE TO GROW. SOME EMPLOYEES ARE BEGINNING
TO FOCUS ON POSSIBLE ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH PROBLEMS.
FOR EXAMPLE, ONE OFFICER INFORMED ADMIN COUNSELOR THIS
AFTERNOON THAT IF SITUATION NOT EXPLAINED SOON,
HE WOULD HAVE NO ALTERNATIVE TO REQUESTING IMMEDIATE
TRANSFER.

3. THE GENERAL UNDESIRABILITY OF FURTHER DELAY

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IS INCREASED BY TWO PRACTICAL FACTORS. DR. JOHNSON, THE EMBASSY PHYSICIAN, HAS LONG-SCHEDULED PLANS FOR A VACATION TRIP WITH HIS FAMILY TO AFRICA. HE IS DUE TO LEAVE FEB. 9, BUT IS ATTEMPTING TO POSTPONE HIS DEPARTURE BY ONE WEEK. THIS MAY NOT BE POSSIBLE WITHOUT PERSONAL EXPENSE OF SUBSTANTIAL CANCELLATION FEES. ALSO, DR. POLLACK'S VISA EXPIRES FEB. 9, AND IT HAD BEEN HIS HOPE TO SPEND WEEKEND IN LONDON AND RETURN HERE WHEN NEEDED. HOWEVER, KOMPLEKTOV OF MPA INFORMED US THIS EVENING THAT HE CANNOT GUARANTEE THAT ANOTHER ENTRY VISA WILL BE ISSUED TO DR. POLLACK. HE IS ESSENTIAL FOR THE BRIEFING PROCESS, AND FOR THIS REASON I HAVE ASKED HIM TO STAY HERE IN THE HOPE THAT HE CAN BEGIN CONSULTATIONS AND BRIEFING TOMORROW.

4. IF SIGNAL SHOULD BE TURNED OFF, WE STILL WILL FACE THESE PROBLEMS. THEREFORE, I URGE THAT-- IF THE SIGNALS ARE OFF TOMORROW-- WE PROCEED TO BRIEF EMPLOYEES ONLY (NOT DEPENDENTS) IN SMALL GROUPS ON STRICTLY CLASSIFIED BASIS. THEY WOULD BE AUTHORIZED TO INFORM SPOUSES THAT PROBLEM HAD DEVELOPED WHICH SEEMED TO REQUIRE BRIEFING ENTIRE EMBASSY COMMUNITY BUT THAT IT HAS NOW BEEN ELIMINATED AND THAT BRIEFING AND CONCERN ARE UNNECESSARY. IF SIGNAL IS NOT TURNED OFF, THIS APPROACH WILL NOT BE TENABLE AND I SEE NO ALTERNATIVE TO PROCEEDING WITH BRIEFING ALONG LINES PREVIOUSLY PLANNED.

5. I RECOGNIZE THAT BRIEFING IN ANY FORM RAISES RISK OF LEAKS TO PRESS, BUT SEE NO WAY WE CAN AVOID EXPLANATIONS TO EMBASSY STAFF NOW THAT CANCELLATION OF ANNOUNCED BRIEFING HAS AROUSED INTENSE QUESTIONING AND CONCERN. PROVIDED SIGNALS ARE TURNED OFF, A CLASSIFIED BRIEFING IN SMALL GROUPS AS SUGGESTED ABOVE WOULD RUN LESS RISK OF LEAK THAN LARGER ONE INCLUDING DEPENDENTS, THOUGH OF COURSE POSSIBILITY OF LEAK WILL EXIST.

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NEVERTHELESS, WE ARE RAPIDLY APPROACHING AN
UNTENABLE SITUATION WHICH IN ITSELF CAN EASILY
LEAD TO DAMAGING PRESS SPECULATION.
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