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FOR THE AMB FM THE SECRETARY, W.HOUSE FOR DR BRZEZINSKI ONLY

E.O. 11652: XGDS-1

TAGS: PARM, MNUC, FR, SA

SUBJECT: SOUTH AFRICAN NUCLEAR TEST ISSUE

1. PLEASE DELIVER THE FOLLOWING MESSAGE FROM ME TO  
GUIRINGAUD AS SOON AS POSSIBLE:

2. QUOTE: DEAR MR. MINISTER:

US TECHNICAL INTELLIGENCE INFORMATION CONFIRMS THE  
EXISTENCE IN THE KALAHARI DESERT, AS RECENTLY CLAIMED BY  
THE USSR, OF A FACILITY WHICH APPEARS TO HAVE MANY OF THE  
ESSENTIAL CHARACTERISTICS OF AN UNDERGROUND NUCLEAR TEST  
SITE

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[REDACTED], BUT ON THE BASIS OF OUR  
PRESENT INFORMATION, WE BELIEVE THAT THE SOVIET ALLEGATIONS  
MUST BE TAKEN WITH THE UTMOST SERIOUSNESS.

AS THE TWO MOST IMPORTANT SUPPLIERS OF NUCLEAR EQUIP-  
MENT AND MATERIALS TO SOUTH AFRICA, I BELIEVE THE UNITED  
STATES AND FRANCE HAVE AN URGENT AND GRAVE RESPONSIBILITY  
TO DO EVERYTHING POSSIBLE TO ESTABLISH CONCLUSIVELY WHETHER  
THE SUSPECTED FACILITY IS A NUCLEAR TEST SITE AND TO PREVENT  
A NUCLEAR EXPLOSION FROM TAKING PLACE. WE HAVE APPROACHED

THE SOUTH AFRICAN GOVERNMENT TO EXPRESS OUR SERIOUS CONCERN OVER THE SOVIET ALLEGATIONS AND TO REQUEST CLARIFICATION OF SOUTH AFRICAN INTENTIONS; THEIR INITIAL RESPONSE ASSERTED SIMPLY THAT SOUTH AFRICA'S NUCLEAR PROGRAM WAS DEVOTED SOLELY TO 'PEACEFUL PURPOSES' -- A POSITION REMINISCENT OF INDIA'S POSITION IN CONNECTION WITH ITS 1974 NUCLEAR TEST.

AS A NEXT STEP, WE ARE INFORMING THE SOUTH AFRICAN GOVERNMENT THAT INFORMATION AVAILABLE TO US INDEPENDENTLY LEADS US TO BELIEVE THAT THE SOVIET ALLEGATION OF A NUCLEAR TEST SITE IN THE KALAHARI HAS A SUBSTANTIAL BASIS; THAT THIS IS A MATTER OF DEEP CONCERN TO THE UNITED STATES; AND THAT ANY NUCLEAR EXPLOSION WOULD OF COURSE HAVE THE GRAVEST CONSEQUENCES. WE WOULD ASK FOR UNEQUIVOCAL CONFIRMATION OR DENIAL OF THE EXISTENCE OF SUCH A FACILITY, WITHOUT REGARD TO WHETHER ITS PURPOSE IS CHARACTERIZED AS PEACEFUL OR OTHERWISE.

UNLESS SOUTH AFRICA QUICKLY AND PERSUASIVELY DEMONSTRATES THAT THERE ARE NO GROUNDS FOR CONCERN, WE INTEND, BY THE MIDDLE OF NEXT WEEK, TO REQUEST SOUTH AFRICAN

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PERMISSION FOR AN ON-SITE INSPECTION AT THE EARLIEST POSSIBLE TIME. WE BELIEVE THAT THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THIS ACTION WOULD BE GREATLY ENHANCED IF FRANCE WERE TO JOIN WITH US IN THE REQUEST AND PARTICIPATE IN ANY INSPECTION WHICH MAY RESULT. I THEREFORE ASK YOU TO CONSIDER WHETHER YOU CAN JOIN US IN AN APPROACH WHICH WE REGARD AS OF FUNDAMENTAL IMPORTANCE TO OUR MUTUAL NON-PROLIFERATION INTERESTS, AND TO INTERNATIONAL PEACE.

IN ORDER TO GIVE MAXIMUM CREDIBILITY TO ANY INSPECTION WHICH MIGHT RESULT, WE SEE SOME MERIT IN ASSOCIATING IN THIS APPROACH SOME THIRD COUNTRY SUCH AS CANADA (OR ENTITY SUCH AS THE IAEA) WHICH HAS NO COMMERCIAL OR OTHER INTEREST THAT WOULD MAKE THE FINDINGS OF THE INSPECTION

TEAM SUSPECT. WE WOULD APPRECIATE ANY VIEWS YOU MAY HAVE ON THIS QUESTION.

WE WISH TO MAKE THIS FURTHER APPROACH TO THE SOUTH AFRICAN GOVERNMENT ON OR ABOUT AUGUST 17 IN ORDER TO AVOID A SITUATION WHERE AN EXPLOSION MIGHT TAKE PLACE OR THE MATTER MIGHT BE BROUGHT BEFORE THE UNITED NATIONS SECURITY COUNCIL AND PRECIPITATE ACTIONS TAKEN BEFORE WE ARE ABLE TO TAKE EFFECTIVE STEPS TO DEAL WITH THE PROBLEM. WE ARE PROVIDING AN INTERIM RESPONSE TO THE USSR INDICATING THAT WE TAKE THEIR STATEMENT MOST SERIOUSLY AND ASKING THAT THEY AVOID ANY IMMEDIATE ACTION IN THE NEXT WEEK WHICH

WOULD PREJUDICE PRACTICAL STEPS TO AVOID AN EXPLOSION. I BELIEVE THAT AS MAJOR SUPPLIERS TO SOUTH AFRICA, THE US AND FRANCE WILL BE SEEN AS BEARING AN IMPORTANT MEASURE OF RESPONSIBILITY FOR NUCLEAR DEVELOPMENTS IN THAT COUNTRY. HOW WE RESPOND TO THIS SITUATION WILL ALSO BE SEEN AS A TEST OF EFFECTIVENESS OF SUPPLIER COOPERATION IN INHIBITING NUCLEAR PROLIFERATION. GIVEN THE URGENCY OF THIS PROBLEM, I FEEL IMPELLED TO ASK FOR YOUR URGENT CONSIDERATION OF OUR PROPOSAL. SIGNED CYRUS VANCE. UNQUOTE.

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3. WE ARE PROVIDING DETAILS OF SENSITIVE INFORMATION INDEPENDENTLY AVAILABLE TO US BY SEPARATE CHANNEL FOR YOUR USE WITH FRENCH AS APPROPRIATE.

4. LONDON FOR AMBASSADOR BREWSTER. PLEASE SHOW A COPY OF THIS TO DAVID OWEN WHOM I TOLD ON THE PHONE THAT WE WOULD BE SENDING THIS MESSAGE TO THE FRENCH. VANCE

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