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APPROVED BY THE ACTING SECRETARY
AF:WEDMONDSON
S/S-O:TGMARTIN
EA:ROAKLEY (SUBS)
S/AS: PFARLEY (INFO)
T/D:JNYE (INFO)

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TO AMEMBASSY TOKYO IMMEDIATE
INFO AMEMBASSY CANBERRA IMMEDIATE

S E C R E T STATE 199117

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E.O. 11652: XGDS-1, 2

TAGS: PARM, US, ST, JA

SUBJECT: SOUTH AFRICAN NUCLEAR ISSUE

FYI BACKGROUND FOR AMBASSADOR ONLY.

1. ASSUME EMBASSY IS AWARE OF RECENT TASS REPORTS ALLEGING COMPLICITY OF U.S., ISRAEL, AND NATO COUNTRIES IN ASSISTING REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA TO DEVELOP NUCLEAR WEAPONS CAPABILITY. PRIOR TO TASS REPORT, SOVIETS MADE ORAL DEMARCHE TO U.S. STATING THAT SOUTH AFRICA IS COMPLETING WORK ON CREATION OF NUCLEAR WEAPON AND THAT UNDERGROUND TESTING FACILITY HAS BEEN BUILT IN KALAHARI DESERT FOR A WEAPONS
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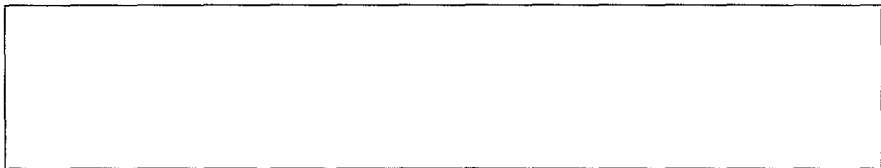
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TEST. SIMILAR DEMARCHES WERE MADE TO UK, FRANCE, AND FRG.

2. SOVIETS EXPRESSED TO U.S. STRONG CONCERN ABOUT POSSIBILITY OF SOUTH AFRICAN TEST. WE HAVE TOLD SOVIETS THAT WE HAVE BEEN GIVING SERIOUS ATTENTION TO SOUTH AFRICAN NUCLEAR ACTIVITIES, THAT WE FULLY SHARE THEIR CONCERN IN PREVENTING A POSSIBLE NUCLEAR TEST, AND THAT WE HAVE MADE OUR DEEP CONCERNS KNOWN TO SOUTH AFRICAN GOVERNMENT (SAG).

REVIEW AUTHORITY: Stephen Worrel, Senior
Reviewer

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PRIOR EVIDENCE OF AN UNSAFEGUARDED ENRICHMENT PLANT IN SOUTH AFRICA CAPABLE OF PRODUCING HIGHLY ENRICHED URANIUM, AND EVIDENCE OF NUCLEAR WEAPONS-RELATED R AND D, IT NOW APPEARS LIKELY THAT SOUTH AFRICANS ARE ENGAGED IN NUCLEAR EXPLOSIVES PROGRAM, AND ARE FURTHER ALONG THAN WE PREVIOUSLY REALIZED. OUR INFORMATION DOES NOT SUGGEST, HOWEVER, THAT AN ACTUAL TEST OF ANY DEVICE IS IMMINENT.

4. SINCE SOVIET DEMARCHE, USG HAS UNDERTAKEN SERIES OF CONSULTATIONS WITH BRITISH, FRENCH, WEST GERMANS, AND ISRAELIS, IN ORDER TO ENSURE COORDINATED APPROACH TO SAG ON ISSUE AND FULLEST POSSIBLE EXCHANGE OF INFORMATION AMONG GOVERNMENTS NAMED IN TASS DISPATCHES. DEPARTMENT BELIEVES GOJ SHOULD BE AWARE OF SITUATION SINCE JAPANESE, WHILE NOT ACCUSED OF TRANSFER OF WEAPONS-RELATED NUCLEAR TECHNOLOGY TO SOUTH AFRICA, HAVE WELL ESTABLISHED TECHNOLOGICAL AND COMMERCIAL LINKS WITH SOUTH AFRICA AND MAY BE PRIVY TO INFORMATION WHICH WOULD BE HELPFUL TO
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6. APART FROM OBVIOUS LONGER-TERM GRAVITY OF ISSUE, EARLY SATISFACTORY AND FULL SAG RESPONSE CRITICAL IN VIEW OF LAGOS ANTI-APARTHEID CONFERENCE WHICH BEGINS AUGUST 22. DEPARTMENT'S VIEW IS THAT, WHILE SAG WILL IN ANY EVENT COME IN FOR SEVERE CONDEMNATION, FAILURE OF SAG TO DEFUSE NUCLEAR ISSUE BY PROVIDING FULL AND PUBLIC ASSURANCES WILL GREATLY INTENSIFY PRESSURES FOR ANTI-SOUTH AFRICAN ACTIONS AND MEASURES OF MOST EXTREME SORT, LIMIT OUR ABILITY TO FORESTALL OR MODERATE EXPECTED DEMANDS FOR INTERNATIONAL ACTION. END FYI.

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S E C R E T STATE 199117

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FOLLOWING REPEAT STATE 199117 ACTION TOKYO INFO CANBERRA AUGUST 22.

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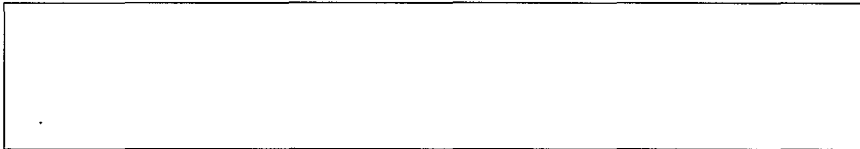
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