

Message Text

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PAGE 01 STATE 008511
ORIGIN SS-25

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DRAFTED BY ACDA/ISP:DMCLINARD
APPROVED BY ACDA:PCWARNKE
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FM SECSTATE WASHDC
TO AMEMBASSY CANBERRA

S E C R E T STATE 008511

EXDIS

E.O. 11652:GDS

TAGS: PARM, XO, AS

SUBJECT: INDIAN OCEAN ARMS LIMITATION TALKS

REF: STATE 290323

1. ON JANUARY 11 AMBASSADOR RENOUF, ACCOMPANIED BY MINISTER BIRCH AND EMBOFF CONTRILL, CALLED ON ACDA DIRECTOR WARNKE TO DISCUSS STATUS OF US-SOVIET INDIAN OCEAN TALKS AND OTHER ARMS CONTROL NEGOTIATIONS. MR. WARNKE ADVISED AUSTRALIANS THAT WE HAVE TENTATIVELY AGREED WITH SOVIETS TO BEGIN NEXT ROUND OF INDIAN O-EAN TALKS IN BERN ON FEB. 7, AND THAT SESSION WILL PROBABLY LAST FOR APPROXIMATELY TEN DAYS.

2. IN RESPONSE TO QUESTION FROM RENOUF, WARNKE SAID SOVIET MOTIVATION TO SEEK AN AGREEMENT ON ARMS LIMITATION IN THE INDIAN OCEAN APPEARS TO BE BOTH POLITICAL AND
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MILITARY. FROM POLITICAL STANDPOINT, IT APPEARS IMPORTANT FOR SOVIETS TO BE SEEN TO BE NEGOTIATING ON ARMS CONTROL MATTERS WITH THE UNITED STATES, AND THEY RECOGNIZE THAT THE PROCESS CANNOT CONTINUE WITHOUT OCCASIONAL RESULTS. ON THE MILITARY SIDE, THEY SEE THAT THE UNITED STATES HAS CERTAIN ADVANTAGES IN THE AREA, AND THEY WISH TO AVERT THE POSSIBILITY OF GREATER US DOMINATION THERE. THEY HAVE

ALSO EXPRESSED CONCERN ABOUT A STRATEGIC THREAT FROM THE DIRECTION OF THE INDIAN OCEAN. THEY SEE DIEGO GARCIA AS A POSSIBLE STAGING BASE FOR B-52'S, AND THEY WOULD LIKE TO BAN SSBNS FROM THE INDIAN OCEAN. WE CAN AGREE NOT TO USE DIEGO GARCIA FOR STRATEGIC AIRCRAFT, BUT WE HAVE TOLD THE SOVIETS WE WILL NOT AGREE TO AN SSBN BAN. WE ARE PREPARED TO SAY THAT WE HAVE NOT USED THE INDIAN OCEAN IN A MAJOR WAY FOR SSBN DEPLOYMENTS, AND THAT WE WOULD NOT DEVIATE FROM THIS PATTERN UNDER A STABILIZATION AGREEMENT.

3. RENOUF ASKED WHETHER THE SOVIET DEPARTURE FROM BERBERA HAD AFFECTED THEIR ATTITUDE TOWARD THE NEGOTIATIONS. WARNKE SAID THAT IT HAD NOT SO FAR, BUT THAT IT MIGHT DO SO IF IT APPEARED THAT THEY COULD NOT FIND A SUBSTITUTE OF SOME SORT FOR BERBERA. THIS LED TO A BRIEF DISCUSSION OF SOVIET INTEREST AND ACTIVITY AROUND ADEN, AND WHETHER, GIVEN THE POLITICAL SITUATION IN THE SOUTHERN PART OF THE ARABIAN PENINSULA, IT WOULD BE IN SOVIET LONG-TERM INTERESTS TO SEEK TO ESTABLISH A PERMANENT PRESENCE THERE.

4. IN RESPONSE TO A QUESTION FROM RENOUF, WARNKE SAID THE NEXT ROUND OF INDIAN OCEAN TALKS WAS NOT LIKELY TO BE THE LAST. HE SAID IT WOULD BE A SHORT ROUND, AND THAT WE FEEL NO SENSE OF URGENCY ABOUT CONCLUDING AN AGREEMENT.

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5. RENOUF ASKED WHETHER AN EXCHANGE OF NOTES BETWEEN THE US AND AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENTS, SUCH AS THEY HAVE SUGGESTED (REFTEL) WOULD CREATE MAJOR PROBLEMS FOR THE US. MR. WARNKE SAID THAT, AS HE UNDERSTOOD THE PROPOSAL, IT SEEMED TO HIM IT WOULD NOT, SINCE UNDER NO CIRCUMSTANCES WOULD WE AGREE TO ANYTHING IN AN INDIAN OCEAN AGREEMENT WITH THE SOVIETS WHICH WOULD CHANGE OUR COMMITMENTS TO OR ALTER OUR PAST PATTERN OF DEFENSE COOPERATION WITH AUSTRALIA. IN RESPONSE TO RENOUF'S QUESTION, WARNKE SAID WE WOULD NOT REPEAT NOT FEEL UNDER ANY OBLIGATION TO "NEGOTIATE" WITH THE SOVIETS CONCERNING ANY SUCH EXCHANGE OF NOTES.

6. AT THEIR REQUEST, WARNKE ALSO BROUGHT AUSTRALIANS UP TO DATE ON STATUS OF COMPREHENSIVE TEST BAN AND SALT NEGOTIATIONS. CHRISTOPHER

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NNN

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