

Message Text

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ACTION PM-05

INFO OCT-01 AF-10 EUR-12 ISO-00 L-03 SS-15 SP-02
NSCE-00 INRE-00 CIAE-00 INR-10 NSAE-00 SSO-00
/058 W

-----074997 011439Z /46

O P 011300Z MAR 78

FM AMEMBASSY VICTORIA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 0760

INFO AMEMBASSY NAIROBI PRIORITY

AMEMBASSY LONDON PRIORITY

SECDEF PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L VICTORIA 0184

E.O.11652: XGDS-1

TAGS: MARR, MPOL, OCLR, US, UK

SUBJECT: SEYCHELLES ISLANDS' AGREEMENT - MILITARY ACCESS ISSUE

REF: A) STATE 51800, B) 77 VICTORIA 703, C) 77 VICTORIA 722

1. AM IN BASIC AGREEMENT WITH BRITISH APPROACH TO ISLANDS' AGREEMENT QUESTION PER REFTTEL A. AS REPORTED REFTELS B AND C, GOS INDICATED TO BRITISH HIGH COMMISSIONER PUGH LATE LAST YEAR ITS DESIRE NOT TO INFORM HMG OF COURTESY VISITS BY MILITARY AIRCRAFT AND WARSHIPS FROM NON-CURRENT USERS AND TO INFORM - BUT NOT CONSULT - ON NON-COURTESY VISITS. OVER PAST FOUR MONTHS, FRENCH HAVE HAD ABOUT SIX SHIP VISITS AND SOVIETS TWO VISITS. WITH EXCEPTION OF TWO FRENCH SHIPS (WHICH WERE ENGAGED IN ASSISTING SEYCHELLES GOVERNMENT IN DEVELOPMENT OF OUTLYING ISLANDS) ALL THESE VISITS WERE CONSIDERED AS COURTESY VISITS. HIGH COMMISSION WAS "INFORMED" BY GOS OF TWO FRENCH "OPERATIONAL" VISITS. IN SAME PERIOD, VISITS BY FRENCH MILITARY AIRCRAFT ENROUTE DIEGO GARCIA TO REUNION HAVE BEEN CONSIDERED BY GOS AS OPERATIONAL IN NATURE AND AGAIN PUGH INFORMED IN ADVANCE OF THEIR ARRIVAL BY MOFA. HE HAS CONSULTED WITH ME ON ALL OCCASIONS.

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2. GOS INTERPRETATION OF COURTESY VISITS APPEARS CONSONANT WITH MY READING OF SECTION (2) OF ISLANDS' AGREEMENT. HOWEVER, DESPITE REASONABLE AND CONSISTENT GOS APPROACH TO DATE RE CLASSIFICATION OF VISITS, LACK OF DEFINITION AS TO WHAT CONSTITUTES A COURTESY VISIT AND HOW AND BY WHOM THAT DETERMINATION IS MADE COULD CONCEIVABLY PRESENT A PROBLEM IN

THE FUTURE. OPPORTUNITY FOR CONSULTATIONS WITH GOS (PARA 1C IN REFTTEL A) SHOULD PROVIDE UK (AND U.S.) WITH BEST AVAILABLE SAFEGUARD REGARDING POSSIBLE ABUSES IN AREA OF COURTESY VISITS. IN SIMILAR VIEN, LANGUAGE IN PARA 1D, GIVING BRITISH OPPORTUNITY TO CONSULT WITH GOS AS APPROPRIATE CONCERNING NON-COURTESY VISITS, SEEMS TO BE CORRECT APPROACH GIVEN PROVISIONS IN SECTION (1) OF ISLANDS' AGREEMENT AND REPORTED SEYCHELLOIS FEELING THAT AGREEMENT IS ENCROACHMENT ON THEIR SOVEREIGNTY.

3. IN MY VIEW, STRICTEST POSSIBLE ADHERENCE BY SEYCHELLES TO IMPORTANT SECURITY ASPECTS CONTAINED SECTION (1) OF ISLANDS' AGREEMENT (DENYING ACCESS AND RIGHTS AND FACILITIES OF MILITARY CHARACTER TO NON-CURRENT USERS AND RIGHT OF ACCESS BY CURRENT USERS IN EVENT OF EMERGENCY DEFENSE NEEDS) SHOULD BE OUR PRIMARY CONSIDERATION IN THIS MATTER. ACCORDINGLY, ANY UK APPROACH CLARIFYING ISSUES IN PARAGRAPH ABOVE SHOULD BE MADE IN LOW-KEY - AND IF NECESSARY, FLEXIBLE - MANNER TO AVOID ANY PROVOCATION WHICH MIGHT FURNISH GOS WITH EXCUSE FOR RENEGOTIATION, THEREBY, POSSIBLY JEOPARDIZING ENTIRE AGREEMENT. ALTHOUGH PRESIDENT RENE (AND FONMIN SINON) HAVE STATED PUBLICLY AND PRIVATELY ON NUMEROUS OCCASIONS THAT SEYCHELLES WILL NOT PERMIT ESTABLISHMENT OF BASES BY ANY FOREIGN POWER, RETENTION OF CORE OF UK-GOS BILATERAL AGREEMENT REMAINS THE KEY ELEMENT IN SUPPORT OF WESTERN STRATEGIC INTERESTS.

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4. IN COURSE RECENT CONSULTATIONS IN NAIROBI, I DISCUSSED ISLANDS' AGREEMENT QUESTION WITH AMBASSADOR LE MELLE (WHO IS PRESENTLY IN WASHINGTON) AND RECOMMENDED THAT HE MEET WITH MR. CHURCHILL OF PM. REQUEST AMBASSADOR BE PROVIDED WITH COPY OF THIS MESSAGE.

MATTSON

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 jan 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: MILITARY BASE AGREEMENTS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 01 mar 1978
Decaption Date: 01 jan 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 20 Mar 2014
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1978VICTOR00184
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: X1
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: D780093-1046
Format: TEL
From: VICTORIA
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1978/newtext/t197803117/aaaadvrb.tel
Line Count: 101
Litigation Code IDs:
Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Message ID: d6f13dba-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ACTION PM
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 2
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: 78 STATE 51800, 77 VICTORIA 703, 77 VICTORIA 722
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 28 apr 2005
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 3147897
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: SEYCHELLES ISLANDS\ AGREEMENT - MILITARY ACCESS ISSUE
TAGS: MARR, MPOL, OCLR, US, UK
To: STATE
Type: TE
vdkgvwkey: odbc://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/d6f13dba-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Sheryl P. Walter
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
20 Mar 2014
Markings: Sheryl P. Walter Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 20 Mar 2014