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OUTGOING MESSAGE

PAGE 001
TOT: 260709Z FEB 88

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BRIEF
TO: IMMEDIATE ROUTINE SEA BRIEF.

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OUTGOING MESSAGE

SUBJECT: MIDDLE EAST BRIEF [REDACTED] FOR 26 FEBRUARY 1988.

FROM: DDI/O/CPAS.

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CONTENTS

1. LEBANON: PROSPECTS FOR HIGGINS RESCUE GROWING DIM
2. AFGHANISTAN: REBELS NAME HEAD OF INTERIM GOVERNMENT
3. [REDACTED]
4. UGANDA: RESTRUCTURING OF CABINET AND ARMY
5. USSR-AFGHANISTAN: KEEPING PRESSURE ON PAKISTAN
6. EC: BACKS ISLAMABAD ON AFGHAN SETTLEMENT TERMS
7. ETHIOPIA: MILITARY SETBACKS IN THE NORTH
8. IN BRIEF

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OUTGOING MESSAGE

1. LEBANON: PROSPECTS FOR HIGGINS RESCUE GROWING DIM
CHANCES THAT LIEUTENANT COLONEL HIGGINS WILL BE RESCUED ARE

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Approved for Release
Date JUN 1993

263

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PAGE 002
TOT: 260709Z FEB 88

FADING AS TIME PASSES AND AMAL RECONSIDERS ITS EFFORTS TO FIND HIM. IN THE 10 DAYS SINCE THE KIDNAPING, HIZBALLAH HAS HAD TIME TO REINFORCE THE SECURITY AROUND HIGGINS AND TO SHIFT THE BURDEN OF GUILT ONTO AMAL FOR TRYING TO RELEASE A US 'SPY.'

MEANWHILE, CROWDS AT RALLIES IN BEIRUT ORCHESTRATED BY HIZBALLAH TO OPPOSE SECRETARY SHULTZ'S VISIT TO THE MIDDLE EAST YESTERDAY CHANTED SEAGANS DEMANDING DEATH TO THE US AND TO HIGGINS. HIZBALLAH SPEAKERS URGED CONFRONTATION WITH BOTH THE US AND THE UN TO REMOVE THEM FROM LEBANON.

IT IS UNLIKELY THAT HIGGINS WILL BE FOUND SOON. HIZBALLAH LEADERS AND IRAN ARE NOW AWARE HE WAS A FORMER MEMBER OF SECRETARY WEINBERGER'S STAFF AND NO DOUBT ASSUME HE HAS DETAILED KNOWLEDGE OF US PROGRAMS AND PLANS IN LEBANON AND THE MIDDLE EAST. AMAL WILL PROBABLY CONTINUE A CURSORY SEARCH FOR HIGGINS BUT WILL TRY TO AVOID CLASHES WITH HIZBALLAH THAT COULD EXPOSE ITS WEAKNESS IN THE SOUTH.

THE ABDUCTION SEEMS TO BE PART OF A LARGER EFFORT TO INTENSIFY PRESSURE ON THE US, FRANCE, AND THE UN TO END THEIR PRESENCE IN LEBANON, TO RESOLVE HOSTAGE ISSUES ON IRANIAN AND HIZBALLAH TERMS, AND PROBABLY TO OBTAIN THE RELEASE OF SHIA TERRORISTS IMPRISONED IN KUWAIT. HIZBALLAH'S LEADERS AND THEIR IRANIAN PATRONS EVIDENTLY THINK THE US AND FRANCE ARE PARTICULARLY VULNERABLE BECAUSE OF THEIR COMING ELECTIONS. HIZBALLAH--OR PARTS OF IT--WILL PROBABLY TRY MORE KIDNAPINGS, RELEASE VIDEOS, POSSIBLY FREE A HOSTAGE, AND SEEK OTHER PUBLICITY TO JOSTLE THE POLITICAL PROCESS IN BOTH WASHINGTON AND PARIS.

2. AFGHANISTAN: REBELS NAME HEAD OF INTERIM GOVERNMENT

LEADERS OF THE INSURGENT ALLIANCE HAVE APPOINTED AN INTERIM GOVERNMENT HEAD AND HAVE INCREASED CRITICISM OF THE US, REFLECTING BOTH THEIR OWN AND PAKISTANI CONCERNS THAT A SETTLEMENT MAY BE IMPOSED ON THEM.

THE SEVEN ALLIANCE LEADERS APPOINTED AHMAD SHAH, DEPUTY CHIEF OF FUNDAMENTALIST LEADER SAYYAF'S PARTY, TO LEAD THEIR RECENTLY PROPOSED INTERIM GOVERNMENT.

ALLIANCE LEADER KHALIS ON MONDAY ACCUSED THE US OF IGNORING INSURGENT INTERESTS IN TRYING TO REACH AN AFGHAN SETTLEMENT WITH MOSCOW AND CRITICIZED WASHINGTON'S REFUSAL TO ACCORD THE ALLIANCE DIPLOMATIC RECOGNITION. HIZBI ISLAMI FACTION LEADER GULBUDDIN ECHOED KHALIS IN A PRESS CONFERENCE ON WEDNESDAY, CLAIMING THAT THE US IS 'SELLING OUT' THE INSURGENTS AND THAT WASHINGTON WANTS TO PREVENT THE CREATION OF AN ISLAMIC STATE IN AFGHANISTAN.

THE APPOINTMENT OF AHMAD SHAH COMPLETES THE PROPOSED INTERIM GOVERNMENT PAKISTAN WILL PRESENT AT THE GENEVA TALKS, ALTHOUGH THE PLAN IS PROBABLY UNACCEPTABLE TO BOTH MOSCOW AND KABUL AND WOULD BE NEARLY IMPOSSIBLE TO IMPLEMENT. THE ALLIANCE'S INTERIM SCHEME INCLUDES POSTS FOR 'MUSLIMS NOW LIVING IN KABUL' AND A PLEDGE THAT THE NEW REGIME WOULD SIGN AND ABIDE BY THE GENEVA ACCORDS.

THE PAKISTANIS--WHO HAVE SECURED CHINESE AND PROBABLY IRANIAN SUPPORT FOR THEIR DEMAND FOR AN INTERIM REGIME--PROBABLY WILL

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PAGE 003
TOT: 260709Z FEB 88

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PUBLICIZE THE PLAN HEAVILY. THEY WILL CLAIM THAT A VIABLE ALTERNATIVE TO NAJIBULLAH NOW EXISTS AND THAT SOVIET ACCEPTANCE OF IT WOULD PERMIT ISLAMABAD TO SIGN A GENEVA AGREEMENT ENDING THE WAR AND ASSURING THE REFUGEES' RETURN.

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THE INSURGENTS' PUBLIC CRITICISM OF THE US IS IN PART THE RESULT OF THEIR LACK OF KNOWLEDGE ABOUT US-SOVIET TALKS ON THE WAR+ THEIR WORRIES ABOUT A CUTOFF OF AID WHILE THE COMMUNISTS HOLD KABUL, AND THEIR DEEP DISTRUST OF SOVIET INTENTIONS. ALTHOUGH ISLAMABAD IS PROBABLY NOT ENCOURAGING THE STATEMENTS, IT MAY BELIEVE THAT THE CRITICISM WILL CAUSE THE INSURGENTS' SUPPORTERS IN THE WEST TO INSIST THAT ANY GENEVA AGREEMENT MUST MEET PAKISTANI DEMANDS FOR SAFEGUARDS AND AN INTERIM GOVERNMENT.

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4. UGANDA: RESTRUCTURING OF CABINET AND ARMY

PRESIDENT MUSEVENI'S RECENT REORGANIZATION OF THE CABINET AND ARMY WILL ADD LITTLE TO THE REGIME'S EFFECTIVENESS.

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PAGE 004
TOT: 260709Z FEB 88

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THE CABINET REORGANIZATION LAST MONDAY ADDED MINISTERS FROM THE INSURGENCY-RACKED NORTH AND EAST AND NAMED MUSEVENI'S PRIMARY ENVOY TO LIBYA, ERIYA KATEGAYA, AS SENIOR DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER. HE IS NOW THE THIRD-HIGHEST RANKING OFFICIAL IN THE GOVERNMENT--OUTRANKING THE TWO OTHER NEWLY APPOINTED DEPUTY PRIME MINISTERS--AND THE EXPECTED SUCCESSOR TO THE AILING PRIME MINISTER, WHO IS 75 YEARS OLD. IN ADDITION, MUSEVENI MOVED THE OFFICE OF CONSTITUTIONAL AFFAIRS FROM THE OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT INTO A SEPARATE MINISTRY.

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SECURITY PROBLEMS CONTINUE, AND LAST WEEK INSURGENTS ATTACKED A CIVILIAN BUS IN THE EAST, KILLING 19 AND INJURING 47+ WHILE REBELS NEAR THE SUDANESE BORDER ATTACKED A UN CONVOY, KILLING TWO STAFF MEMBERS. 15 VEHICLES HAVE BEEN STOLEN RECENTLY FROM FOREIGN AGENCIES INVOLVED IN UGANDAN REFUGEE RELIEF.

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DESPITE MUSEVENI'S MOVES TO MAKE THE CABINET MORE REPRESENTATIVE, POWER REMAINS LARGELY WITH THE DEPUTY PRIME MINISTERS, WHO, LIKE THE PRESIDENT, ARE ALL FROM ETHNIC GROUPS IN SOUTHERN UGANDA. MUSEVENI'S DISTRUST OF THE BUREAUCRACY AND HIS PREOCCUPATION WITH THE INSURGENCIES AND THE FRAIL ECONOMY MAKE IT UNLIKELY THAT HE WILL DELEGATE MUCH RESPONSIBILITY TO THE NEW CABINET MEMBERS, WILL UNDERMINE THEIR EFFECTIVENESS. THE CREATION OF THE CONSTITUTIONAL AFFAIRS MINISTRY SEPARATE FROM THE OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT SUGGESTS MUSEVENI CONTINUES TO VIEW DEMOCRATIC REFORMS AS A SECONDARY CONCERN.

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THE REORGANIZATION IS UNLIKELY TO IMPROVE ITS PERFORMANCE AGAINST THE INSURGENTS WITHIN THE NEXT SEVERAL MONTHS.

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5. USSR-AFGHANISTAN: KEEPING PRESSURE ON PAKISTAN

PRAVDA YESTERDAY STRONGLY CRITICIZED PAKISTAN FOR DEMANDING AN AGREEMENT ON A COALITION GOVERNMENT IN AFGHANISTAN PRIOR TO THE SIGNING OF THE GENEVA ACCORDS. THE ARTICLE--WHICH ACCUSED ISLAMABAD OF TRYING TO TORPEDO THE GENEVA PROCESS--SAID THAT PAKISTAN'S "NEW DEMANDS" WOULD DELAY SIGNING AT GENEVA AND PROLONG THE STAY OF SOVIET TROOPS IN AFGHANISTAN AND MENTIONED THE US AGREEMENT TO ACT AS GUARANTOR OF THE ACCORDS. DEPUTY FOREIGN MINISTER BESSMERTNYKH SAID ON SOVIET TELEVISION WEDNESDAY THAT THE SOVIETS--AFTER TALKS WITH SECRETARY SHULTZ THIS WEEK--NOW HAVE "DEFINITE HOPES" THAT THE GENEVA ROUND THAT BEGINS NEXT WEDNESDAY WILL PRODUCE A SETTLEMENT. HE ACCUSED PAKISTANI AUTHORITIES, HOWEVER, OF TRYING TO DELAY THE START OF THE TALKS.

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THE CONTINUED HARSH CRITICISM OF PAKISTAN'S POSITION IS PART OF MOSCOW'S INTENSE PRESSURE ON ISLAMABAD TO DROP ITS INSISTENCE ON PRIOR AGREEMENT ON A COALITION GOVERNMENT AND TO SIGN THE GENEVA AGREEMENTS WITH THE KABUL REGIME SOON. IN CONTRAST, THE SOVIETS APPEAR TO BE EMPHASIZING THE POSITIVE ROLE OF THE US IN GUARANTEEING FUTURE ACCORDS SINCE SECRETARY SHULTZ'S VISIT. MANY EARLIER ARTICLES ACCUSED THE US OF OBSTRUCTING A SETTLEMENT. THIS SHIFT, TOGETHER WITH SOVIET SUGGESTIONS THAT PAKISTAN WOULD BEAR THE RESPONSIBILITY FOR SOVIET TROOPS REMAINING IN AFGHANISTAN IF GENEVA ACCORDS ARE NOT SIGNED, APPARENTLY IS AN ATTEMPT BY MOSCOW TO

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PAGE 005
TOT: 260709Z FEB 88

PORTRAY ISLAMABAD AS INCREASINGLY ISOLATED--EVEN FROM THE US--IN ITS POSITION ON AN AFGHAN SETTLEMENT.

6. EC: BACKS ISLAMABAD ON AFGHAN SETTLEMENT TERMS

THE EC POLITICAL COMMITTEE ON WEDNESDAY CALLED FOR A TOTAL AND IRREVOCABLE SOVIET TROOP WITHDRAWAL FROM AFGHANISTAN IN 1988. IT ALSO COMMENDED PAKISTAN'S "POSITIVE AND RESPONSIBLE" POSITION ON AFGHANISTAN.

THE EC STATEMENT IMPLICITLY ALIGNS THE WEST EUROPEANS WITH THE PAKISTANI DEMAND FOR THE ESTABLISHMENT OF AN INTERIM GOVERNMENT IN KABUL BEFORE A SOVIET WITHDRAWAL. THE EUROPEANS ARE CONCERNED THAT MOSCOW MAY STILL HARBOR HOPES OF LEAVING A PRO-SOVIET REGIME IN KABUL OR TRY TO RETAIN CONTROL OF BORDER AREAS IN NORTHERN AFGHANISTAN.

7. ETHIOPIA: MILITARY SETBACKS IN THE NORTH

PRESIDENT MENGISTU IS CONCERNED THAT REBEL ATTACKS ARE INCREASINGLY PUTTING HIS ARMY ON THE DEFENSIVE IN ERITREA AND TIGRAY PROVINCES. MENGISTU RECENTLY SPENT THREE WEEKS INSPECTING GOVERNMENT DEFENSES IN THE NORTH, AND HE HAS DISMISSED THE COMMANDER OF GOVERNMENT FORCES IN ASMERA. THE REBELS ALSO ATTACKED DEK'EMHARE AND MANDAFARA EARLIER THIS MONTH. TIGREAN INSURGENTS, MEANWHILE, DESTROYED A MICROWAVE RELAY TOWER AT ADIGRAT, SEVERING COMMUNICATIONS BETWEEN THE CAPITAL AND KEY NORTHERN CITIES.

MENGISTU, WHO REMAINS DETERMINED TO PURSUE A MILITARY SOLUTION TO THE 27-YEAR-OLD INSURGENCY, IS UNHAPPY WITH THE ARMY'S POOR PERFORMANCE. ARMY MORALE IS SAGGING, HOWEVER, AND THE INSURGENTS ARE LIKELY TO PRESS THEIR GAINS AGAINST INACTIVE GOVERNMENT FORCES.

8. IN BRIEF

MIDDLE EAST

--PRESS REPORTS LEBANESE ARMY'S 6TH BRIGADE REPLACED SHIA MILITIA ELEMENTS ALONG BEIRUT'S GREEN LINE YESTERDAY . . . PROBABLY USING SHIA BRIGADE TO STRENGTHEN BUFFER BETWEEN AMAL, HIZBALLAH . . . REDUCE TENSIONS WITHIN LEBANESE SHIA COMMUNITY.

EAST ASIA

--CHINA STILL STALLING ON UN SANCTIONS AGAINST IRAN, FOREIGN MINISTER'S VISIT THIS WEEK . . .

OUTGOING MESSAGE

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PAGE 006
TOT: 260709Z FEB 88

OUTGOING MESSAGE

SOUTH ASIA

---INDIA'S PRIME MINISTER GANDHI INVITED PAKISTAN'S PRESIDENT ZIA TO NEW DELHI TO EXCHANGE VIEWS ON AFGHANISTAN . . . PROBABLY EFFORT TO INCREASE PRESSURE ON ISLAMABAD WITHOUT ANTAGONIZING US . . . ZIA LIKELY TO CHOOSE DATE AFTER GENEVA TALKS.

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