

Message Text

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ACTION AF-06

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FM AMCONSUL ASMARA

TO AMEMBASSY ADDIS ABABA PRIORITY

INFO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 3743

C O N F I D E N T I A L ASMARA 1031

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINS ASEC ET

SUBJ: SECURITY OF CONGEN STAFF

REF: ADDIS 14834

1. CONGEN SINCERELY APPRECIATES EMBASSY'S EXPRESSION OF CONCERN FOR SECURITY SITUATION OF OFFICIAL AMERICANS IN ASMARA BY SENDING RSO KLINGENMAIER FOR FIVE DAY VISIT. WE REGRET THAT, AS RESULT OF AIR TRANSPORTATION DIFFICULTIES, RSO WAS OBLIGED TO SACRIFICE CHRISTMAS HOLIDAY WITH HIS FAMILY, YET I BELIEVE THAT HE PLAYED PARTICULARLY EFFECTIVE ROLE IN OBTAINING COOPERATION OF EPMG OFFICIALS ON ISSUE OF RELOCATION AND CONSOLIDATION OF KAGNEW CIVILIANS.

2. RSO BRIEFED CONGEN STAFF IN OUTLINE ON HIS INTENDED RECOMMENDATIONS CONCERNING MEASURES TO BE TAKEN TO FURTHER IMPROVE SECURITY OF CONGEN AMERICAN PERSONNEL. CONGEN WISHES, THEREFORE, TO OFFER ITS OBSERVATIONS ON THESE RECOMMENDATIONS BEFORE FINAL DECISION IS TAKEN ON THIS MATTER.

3. WE CONCUR WHOLEHEARTEDLY WITH ALL RECOMMENDED MEASURES TO IMPROVE PHYSICAL SECURITY ON CONGEN COMPOUND, AND ARE MOVING QUICKLY TO IMPLEMENT THEM. IT IS OUR UNDERSTANDING, HOWEVER, THAT PRINCIPLE RECOMMENDATION IS THAT ENTIRE AMERICAN STAFF SHOULD, AS TEMPORARY MEASURE, SPEND NIGHT ON CONGEN COMPOUND. THIS REQUIREMENT WOULD BE SUBJECT TO REVIEW EVERY 30 DAYS. THIS
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MEASURE WILL REQUIRE DPO, GSO, COMMUNICATOR, SECRETARY AND THREE

MSG'S TO BE ALLOTTED SLEEPING QUARTERS ON COMPOUND WHICH CURRENTLY HOUSES CONSUL GENERAL AND HIS WIFE, ADMIN OFFICER, HIS WIFE AND TWO CHILDREN, NCOIC AND TWO MSG'S; THEREBY CREATING RESTRICTIVE AND UNCOMFORTABLE HOUSING SITUATION.

4. WHILE ONE CANNOT DENY THAT MOVING CONGEN STAFF ONTO COMPOUND AT NIGHT WOULD MARKEDLY DECREASE DANGER OF KIDNAPPING, IT IS MY OPINION THAT THIS MEASURE REPRESENTS SUBSTANTIAL INCREASE IN HARDSHIP TO BE ENDURED BY CONGEN STAFF. ADVERSE IMPACT OF THIS MEASURE, WHICH MAY BE JUSTIFIABLE ACCORDING TO STRICT SECURITY CONSIDERATIONS, WILL FALL SQUARELY ON ALREADY-FRAYED MORALE OF STAFF. SOME OF STAFF HAVE LIVED UNDER ABSOLUTE DUSK-TO-DAWN CURFEW FOR NEARLY ELEVEN MONTHS, AND UNDER RIGID PROHIBITION OF LAND TRAVEL OUTSIDE OF AUSTERE AND STRIFE-TORN ASMARA FOR OVER FIVE MONTHS. IN ADDITION, STAFF HAS ENDURED ANXIETIES OF INTERMITTENTLY ACTIVE INSURGENCY WHICH, BEYOND ASSASSINATIONS, REPRISALS AND FREQUENT FIREFIGHTS WITHIN CITY, HAS MANIFESTED SPECIFIC AND ACCELERATING ANTI-AMERICAN ASPECT RESULTING IN FIVE KIDNAPPINGS AND TWO DEATHS AMONG SMALL (70) AMERICAN COMMUNITY. THAT CONGEN STAFF WILL BE COMPELLED TO SPEND AT LEAST 20 HOURS TOGETHER PER WORKDAY (8 HOURS AT WORK AND 12 HOURS DURING CURFEW), DENIED ALL AMENITIES WHICH INDIVIDUAL HOUSES OFFER, WILL HAVE UNDENIABLY NEGATIVE EFFECT ON MORALE. PERSONNEL SECURITY SITUATION IN ASMARA, WHILE PROBABLY NOT COMPARABLE IN INTENSITY OF VIOLENCE TO OTHER, PAST AND PRESENT, SITUATIONS FACED BY FOREIGN SERVICE EMPLOYEES, EXCEEDS, IN TERMS OF DURATION OF HOSTILITY AND RESTRICTIVENESS, VIRTUALLY ALL OTHER SIMILAR SITUATIONS.

5. I BELIEVE THAT EMBASSY WILL AGREE THAT "TEMPORARY" MEASURES TAKEN IN ERITREA HAVE DISTURBING HABIT OF BECOMING "PERMANENT", SIMPLY BECAUSE CONDITIONS UNDER WHICH THEY ARE IMPOSED RARELY SHOW ANY IMPROVEMENT. LIKEWISE, I AM CERTAIN THAT EMBASSY WOULD CONCUR THAT, AT PRESENT, THERE ARE NO TANGIBLE INDICATIONS THAT EITHER EPMG OR INSURGENTS ARE INCLINED TO SEEK NEGOTIATED SETTLEMENT TO CURRENT HOSTILITIES, AND THAT THEREFORE, RSO'S RECOMMENDED MEASURE IS MOST LIKELY TO BE "TEMPORARY" WELL BEYOND FORESEEABLE FUTURE.

6. IF IT IS AGREED THAT SITUATION IN ASMARA ALREADY CONSTITUTES
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"PRISON-LIKE" ATMOSPHERE AND "PRESSURE-COOKER" CIRCUMSTANCES, THEN I SUGGEST THAT CERTAIN CONDITIONS SHOULD BE APPENDED TO THIS SECURITY IN ORDER TO MAINTAIN MINIMAL MORALE NECESSARY TO SUSTAIN OPERATIONAL EFFICIENCY. I PROPOSE FOLLOWING: A) AFTER TWO 30-DAY PERIODS OF "TEMPORARY" RELOCATION OF CONGEN STAFF ONTO CONSULATE COMPOUND, THAT STEPS BE TAKEN TO INSTITUTE SCHEDULED PROGRAM OF R&R FOR ENTIRE CONGEN STAFF (INCLUDING MSG'S) EITHER IN OR OUT OF COUNTRY; B) ANY MODIFICATIONS TO

CONGEN COMPOUND WHICH ARE DEEMED USEFUL TO IMPROVE AMENITIES FOR MORALE PURPOSES BE GIVEN PRIORITY ATTENTION; C) CONGEN STAFFING BE RE-EXAMINED TO DETERMINE ESSENTIALITY OF ALL STAFF MEMBERS, E.G. APO AND ADMIN OFFICER WONDER WHETHER SECRETARIAL POSITION IS NECESSARY, THOUGH CURRENT INCUMBENT IS DEFINITE ASSET, EVEN SHE QUESTIONS WHETHER HER SERVICES ARE ESSENTIAL; D) AGREEMENT BE GIVEN THAT EVEN THOUGH CURRENT USG-LEASED HOUSING OFF CONGEN COMPOUND WILL ONLY BE UTILIZED FEW HOURS PER WEEK, THAT LEASES NOT BE TERMINATED UNLESS RECOMMENDED MEASURES ARE OFFICIALLY CHANGED FROM "TEMPORARY" TO "PERMANENT; E) CONGEN BE ENCOURAGED AND SUPPORTED IN MAKING SECURITY ARRANGEMENTS WITH EPMG EQUIVALENT TO THOSE WHICH ARE CONSIDERED ACCEPTABLE FOR DOD-CONTRACT MANAGERS AT BAROTOLO ESTATES.

7. CONGEN WOULD APPRECIATE EMBASSY'S COMMENTS.
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