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With the compliments of

Ken Dawkins

You may be interested to see
the attached file note.

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2G/3157 FILE NOTE

MOSCOW-WASHINGTON HOTLINE UPGRADE

1. The Moscow-Washington hotline was upgraded in 1986. I talked to the Communications Attache at the American Embassy, Phillip Tinney about the facilities it offered. He gave me a copy of three papers from a US Communications newsletter these are attached. The papers cover the history of the hotline, provide some broad information on the upgrade and a description of the inter-continental satellite communications link. The newsletter contained more detailed information on the negotiations leading to the upgrade but this item was classified and although I was able to read it I was not able to have a copy. Mr Tinney knew little more about the system than was contained in the papers.

2. I am not clear where the idea for the upgrade originated. Mr Tinney thought that it had come from the Soviets. However, the papers I saw reported that the proposal to use facsimile over the hot lines was one of "three confidence building measures vis-a-vis the USSR" recommended in a report to the Congress on "Direct Communications Links and other Measures to Enhance Stability" dated 11 April 1983 by the Secretary of Defence Caspar W Weinberger. The other two recommendations were the establishment of high speed data links between each Government and its Embassy in the others Capital. The recommendations were endorsed by President Reagan but it seemed that only the facsimile option was of interest to the Russians and the other recommendations were not adopted.

3. An exchange of notes in July 1984 between the acting Secretary of State for the US Kenneth Damm and Viktor Isakov Soviet Charge d' Affairs agreed the establishment of the facsimile capability for the Hotline. The facsimile was an addition to the existing low speed telegraph circuits.

4. The proposals had political value. President Reagan said the link was "..... a positive step towards enhancing international stability and reducing the risk that accidents, miscalculation or misinterpretation could lead to confrontation or conflict between the US and the Soviet Union"

5. Negotiations were carried out at US Deputy Assistant Secretary level and meetings were held with the Russians in both Washington and Moscow. The link took two years to become established.

6. There are 3 circuits:

i. by satellite via Intelsat/Molniya;

ii. a submarine cable;

iii. a defence satellite link (for which I await fuller information).

7. The equipment comprises a facsimile and a "personal computer" (PC) with a specially designed facility for encryption from a crypto key contained on a floppy disc. The equipments were designed by the US and were supplied, against reimbursement of cost, to the Russians.

8. Mr Tinney provided a number of contact points in the State Department for further discussion. I passed this information to the Senior FCO Resident Engineer in Washington Mr Norman Davies and asked him to try to find out more precise details of the equipments used, the costs, and the US experiences of using the facsimile link. I await a report.

C. K. Davies

C K DAVIES
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