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FM UKMIS GENEVA

TO DESKBY 041730Z FCO

TELNO 135

OF 041632Z MARCH 88

INFO IMMEDIATE ISLAMABAD, KABUL, UKMIS NEW YORK, MOSCOW, WASHINGTON
INFO ROUTINE NEW DELHI

YOUR TELNO 196 TO ISLAMABAD: AFGHANISTAN: PROXIMITY TALKS

SUMMARY

1. SATTAR (PAKISTAN PUS) SAYS CONSIDERABLE PROGRESS ON SOVIET WITHDRAWAL ISSUE BUT KEY PROBLEM REMAINS: SHOULD PAKISTAN SIGN AGREEMENT WITHOUT GUARANTEE OF A COALITION GOVERNMENT.

DETAIL

2. I CALLED ON SATTAR AT 1200Z ON 4 MARCH, SHORTLY AFTER ACTING FOREIGN MINISTER NOORANI'S DEPARTURE FOR ISLAMABAD. SATTAR SPOKE IN MUCH THE SAME TERMS AS HE HAD TO THE PUS ON 1 MARCH (YOUR TUR). AS EXPECTED, THE AFGHANS HAD AGREED TO A NINE-MONTHS TIMEFRAME FOR WITHDRAWAL, BUT THE CENTRAL PROBLEM FOR PAKISTAN WAS TO ENSURE THAT SATISFACTORY CONDITIONS EXISTED FOR RETURN OF REFUGEES. IN SEPTEMBER LAST YEAR SOVIET UNION HAD APPEARED AWARE OF NEED FOR THE RIGHT POLITICAL CONDITIONS, AND HAD ACCEPTED CORDOVEZ'S SUGGESTION ON A THREE-WAY INTRA-AFGHAN DIALOGUE. HOWEVER, GORBACHEV'S SPEECH ON 8 FEBRUARY DECOUPLED THE TWO ISSUES AND CORDOVEZ WAS NOW SAYING THAT IT WAS FOR THE AFGHAN PEOPLE ALONE TO DECIDE ON THE COMPOSITION OF THEIR GOVERNMENT. THE SOVIET UNION WERE PRESSING VERY HARD FOR PAKISTANI SIGNATURE BY 15 MARCH. THE SOVIET UNION HAD TOLD PAKISTAN ON 10/11 FEBRUARY THAT IF THE ACCORDS WERE NOT SIGNED, THEY HAD 'ALTERNATIVE PLANS'. PAKISTAN WOULD BE INTERESTED IN ANY INFORMATION WE HAD ABOUT WHAT THESE PLANS MIGHT BE. PAKISTAN HAD NOT GIVEN A CLEAR REPLY BUT CONTINUED TO STRESS THE IMPORTANCE OF FORMATION OF A NEW GOVERNMENT IN KABUL. AT PRESENT THE TALKS WERE 'ALMOST AT DEADLOCK'.

3. SATTAR CONFIRMED AGREEMENT ON WITHDRAWAL OF 50 PER CENT OF SOVIET TROOPS IN FIRST THREE MONTHS, BUT THERE WAS NO PRECISE TIME-TABLE FOR LAST SIX MONTHS AND TERRITORIAL PHASINGS HAD STILL TO BE WORKED OUT. PAKISTAN COULD UNDERSTAND SOVIET RELUCTANCE TO DISCLOSE TROOP MOVEMENTS IN ADVANCE, AND RECOGNISED THAT THE

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AMERICANS HAD WAYS OF CHECKING SOVIET TROOP MOVEMENTS, IN ADDITION TO INFORMATION FROM THE UN MONITORING TEAMS. WITH ASSURANCES FROM CORDOVEZ ON THIS POINT THE PROBLEM SHOULD NOT BE DIFFICULT TO SOLVE.

4. PAKISTAN REMAINED CONCERNED OVER THE LACK OF SYMMETRY IN WITHDRAWAL OF MILITARY SUPPORT FROM THE PDPA AND THE AFGHAN RESISTANCE (PARA 10 OF TUR). SATTAR HOPED THE AMERICANS WOULD FOLLOW UP SHULTZ'S STATEMENT IN MOSCOW THAT THE US WOULD SEEK A COMMITMENT BY THE SOVIET UNION ON THE DISCONTINUATION OF MILITARY SUPPLIES TO THE PDPA AFTER 15 MAY AS A CONDITION FOR A US GUARANTEE FOR THE AGREEMENTS.

5. IN DECIDING WHETHER OR NOT TO SIGN THE AGREEMENTS, PAKISTAN HAD TO GIVE DUE WEIGHT TO RESISTANCE VIEWS. AT PRESENT THEY WOULD DENOUNCE ANY SIGNATURE AS A BETRAYAL. EMIGRE VIEWS IN FAVOUR OF SIGNATURE COUNTED FAR LESS THAN THOSE OF THE MUJAHIDEEN. THE RESISTANCE BELIEVED THEY WERE CLOSE TO TOPPLING THE NAJIB REGIME, AND FEARED THAT THE SIGNATURE OF THE GENEVA AGREEMENTS WOULD GIVE NAJIB A NEW LEASE OF LIFE.

6. I SAID I WAS GRATEFUL TO RECEIVE THIS BRIEFING AND WOULD REPORT AT ONCE TO LONDON. AS THE PUS HAD TOLD HIM ON 1 MARCH, WE FULLY SUPPORTED PAKISTAN IN ITS EMPHASIS ON THE NEED FOR AN INTERIM GOVERNMENT. BUT SOVIET TROOP WITHDRAWAL WAS A CLEAR PRIORITY.

7. AS I WAS LEAVING, SATTAR SAID HE WOULD LIKE A REPLY TO A QUESTION HE PUT IN LONDON ON THE LAW GOVERNING RECOGNITION OF MULTIPLE AUTHORITIES IN A COUNTRY UNDERGOING CIVIL WAR. WE AGREED TO MEET AGAIN ON 7 OR 8 MARCH.

8. SEE MIFT.

SANKEY

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