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TEXT

TAGS: AU, PREL, OPRC  
COMBINE: COMPLETE

SUBJECT: REQUEST FOR STATEMENT FROM SENIOR  
ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL ON U.S. VIEWS OF AUSTRIA AND  
EUROPEAN SECURITY SYSTEM

1. SUMMARY: THE "NEUE KRONENZEITUNG," AUSTRIA'S LARGEST  
NEWSPAPER, IS PREPARING TO RUN A SERIES OF ARTICLES ON  
AUSTRIA AND EUROPE. FOR THIS SERIES, WHICH WILL APPEAR  
THE WEEK BEFORE THE AUSTRIAN REFERENDUM ON EU MEMBERSHIP,  
ON JUNE 12, THE NEWSPAPER REQUESTS A STATEMENT EXPLAINING  
THE U.S.'S VIEW OF HOW AUSTRIA WILL FIT INTO THE NEW  
EUROPEAN SECURITY ARCHITECTURE. "KRONEN ZEITUNG" ALSO  
REQUESTS AN INTERVIEW WITH A SENIOR OFFICIAL, WHO CAN GO  
INTO MORE DETAIL. END SUMMARY.

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2. AUSTRIANS WILL GO TO THE POLLS ON JUNE 12 TO VOTE ON WHETHER TO JOIN THE EUROPEAN UNION. AUSTRIA'S LARGEST AND MOST INFLUENTIAL NEWSPAPER, THE "NEUE KRONENZEITUNG," IS NOW READING A SERIES OF ARTICLES ON EUROPE, WHICH IT WILL RUN JUST BEFORE THE REFERENDUM. ONE ELEMENT IN THIS SERIES WILL BE FOREIGN POLICY. THE NEWSPAPER WOULD LIKE TO INCLUDE U.S. VIEWS OF THE NEW EUROPEAN SECURITY ARCHITECTURE IN ITS REPORTING. THIS ATTRACTIVE OFFER IS, HOWEVER, NOT WITHOUT ITS PITFALLS.

3. THE "KRONENZEITUNG" IS A MASS-CIRCULATION TABLOID, WHICH HAS BY SOME ACCOUNTS THE LARGEST CIRCULATION PER CAPITA OF ANY NEWSPAPER IN EUROPE. IT IS SAID TO REACH ROUGHLY 40 PERCENT OF THE POPULATION OF AUSTRIA. WHILE BY NO MEANS A QUALITY NEWSPAPER, IT IS THE DOMINANT FORCE ON THE AUSTRIAN MEDIA LANDSCAPE AND EXERTS FAR MORE INFLUENCE ON PUBLIC OPINION THAN ANY OTHER NEWSPAPER.

4. THE EMBASSY'S RELATIONS WITH "KRONENZEITUNG" HAVE BEEN STRAINED IN RECENT YEARS, MAINLY BECAUSE THE "KRONENZEITUNG" HAS MISSED FEW OPPORTUNITIES TO RAIL AT THE U.S. FOR PLACING **KURT WALDHEIM** ON THE WATCH-LIST. LATELY, HOWEVER, THE NEWSPAPER'S EDITORIAL LINE APPEARS TO BE MELLOWING. ITS REQUEST FOR A "SHORT STATEMENT EXPLAINING THE U.S. POSITION AND THE ROLE AUSTRIA COULD AND SHOULD PLAY IN A NEW GLOBAL SECURITY SYSTEM IN EUROPE" IS ANOTHER INSTANCE OF THIS.

5. THIS REQUEST COMES AT A TIME WHEN AUSTRIAN POLITICIANS, FEARFUL OF AN ADVERSE IMPACT ON THE REFERENDUM, ARE RELUCTANT TO DISCUSS FOREIGN AND SECURITY POLICY ISSUES, ESPECIALLY THE EFFECT OF EU MEMBERSHIP ON AUSTRIA'S POLICY OF NEUTRALITY, WHICH A WEEKLY NEWSMAGAZINE HERE RECENTLY REFERRED TO AS "THE OPIATE OF THE PEOPLE." BY GIVING "KRONENZEITUNG" A STATEMENT, WE RUN THE RISK OF SEEMING TO INTERJECT OURSELVES INTO AN INTERNAL AUSTRIAN DEBATE IN A BIG WAY. ON THE OTHER HAND, WE ALSO HAVE AN OPPORTUNITY TO GET OUR POLICY ON RECORD AND TO ASSURE AUSTRIANS THAT WE ARE NOT TRYING TO DICTATE THEIR FUTURE OR FORCE THEM TO GIVE UP THEIR POLICY OF NEUTRALITY.

6. ACTION REQUESTED: "KRONENZEITUNG" WOULD LIKE THIS SHORT STATEMENT FROM AS SENIOR AN OFFICIAL AS POSSIBLE. (THEY MENTION, HOPEFULLY, THE SECRETARY OF STATE.) DR. FERDINAND HENNEBICHLER, THE FREELANCE REPORTER AND SOMETIME AUSTRIAN PRESS ATTACHE WHO HAS FORWARDED THE REQUEST, WOULD ALSO LIKE THE OPPORTUNITY TO INTERVIEW A "HIGH-RANKING EXPERT OR OFFICIAL" WHO COULD EXPLAIN U.S. VIEWS IN MORE DETAIL.

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7. ON BALANCE, WE THINK COOPERATING WITH "KRONENZEITUNG" ON THIS PROJECT IS A RISK WORTH TAKING. THERE IS, AFTER ALL, NO BETTER MEANS OF GETTING U.S. POLICY BEFORE A SIGNIFICANT SHARE OF THE AUSTRIAN POPULACE. WE THEREFORE REQUEST A BRIEF STATEMENT THAT COULD BE ISSUED UNDER

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WHATEVER NAME SEEMS MOST APPROPRIATE. WE SUGGEST SOMETHING ALONG THE FOLLOWING LINES:

"THE UNITED STATES, WHICH HAS SUPPORTED EUROPEAN INTEGRATION THROUGHOUT THE POST-WAR PERIOD, WELCOMES AUSTRIA'S INTENTION TO JOIN THE EUROPEAN UNION. WHETHER AUSTRIA JOINS, HOWEVER, IS STRICTLY FOR AUSTRIANS TO DETERMINE.

THE SECURITY OF EUROPE IS VITAL TO THE SECURITY OF THE UNITED STATES. OUR GOAL IS AN UNDIVIDED EUROPE, WHERE ALL NATIONS ENJOY DEMOCRACY AND ECONOMIC FREEDOM.

TO HELP ACHIEVE THIS GOAL, THE UNITED STATES SUPPORTS THE CREATION OF A WESTERN EUROPEAN DEFENSE AND SECURITY IDENTITY. THE UNITED STATES INTENDS TO WORK COOPERATIVELY WITH ALL THE INSTITUTIONS OF WESTERN EUROPE--NATO, THE EU, THE WEU, AND THE CSCE--TO DEAL WITH THE PROBLEMS OF THE POST-COLD WAR WORLD."

8. WE FURTHER REQUEST ASSISTANCE IN ARRANGING AN INTERVIEW, BY TELEPHONE, FOR DR. HENNEBICHLER WITH A USG OFFICIAL WHO CAN SPEAK KNOWLEDGEABLY ABOUT OUR VIEWS OF NEUTRALITY, A COMMON EUROPEAN SECURITY AND FOREIGN POLICY, AND SIMILAR ISSUES. WE SUGGEST THIS BE DONE ON BACKGROUND.

9. PLEASE ADVISE.

DAVIDSON, ACTING

ADMIN  
END OF MESSAGE

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