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E.O. 12065: RDS-1 12/20/09 (MELTON, R.H.) OR-P
TAGS: PEPR IR US
SUBJECT: (C) IRAN: GETTING THROUGH TO KHOMETNI

SUMMARY: (C - ENTIRE TEXT) BRITISH JOURNALIST ANDREW WHITLEY, DRAWING ON HIS EXPERIENCE IN REVOLUTIONARY IRAN, SUGGESTS THAT THE IRANIANS ARE WAITING FOR A SPECIFIC COUNTER OFFER FROM US TO THEIR TRIBUNAL SCHEME. HE THINKS WE MUST SEEK TO WORK WITHIN THE ONLY NEGOTIATING FRAMEWORK IRANIANS UNDERSTAND, I.E., THE BARGAINING OF THE BAZAAR. FURTHER, WE SHOULD USE NON-UK FIRST SPEAKING DIPLOMATS TO PRESS OUR CASE WITH KEY FIGURES LIKE RAFSANJANI. END SUMMARY

1. EMBOFF SPOKE AT SOME LENGTH TO BRITISH JOURNALIST ANDREW WHITLEY DECEMBER 20. ALTHOUGH WHITLEY'S EXPULSION FROM IRAN IS NOW MANY WEEKS OLD, HE IS STILL CONSIDERED HERE TO HAVE ESTABLISHED THE BEST CONTACTS IN TEHRAN OF ANY FOREIGN JOURNALIST.

2. WHITLEY OFFERED THE FOLLOWING ANALYSIS. THE IRANIANS SEE THEMSELVES IN A BARGAINING RELATIONSHIP, LITTLE DIFFERENT FROM A RUG DEALER IN A BAZAAR. THEIR MAXIMUM DEMAND WAS STATED (RETURN THE SHAH). OUR REACTION (NO RETURN OF THE SHAH) WAS REGARDED AS AN EXTREME POSITION

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SUBJECT TO COMPROMISE. THE IRANIANS THEN PREDICTABLY STEPPED BACK FROM THEIR INITIAL DEMAND (A TRIBUNAL OR GRAND JURY), AND ARE PUZZLED BY WHAT THEY REGARD AS OUR FAILURE TO DO THE SAME. WHITLEY BELIEVES THAT BY NOT OFFERING A SPECIFIC FORMULA SHORT OF OUR INITIAL POSITION, WE RISK LOSING ALL WE HAVE GAINED BY THE DEPARTURE OF THE SHAH.

3. WHITLEY SAID HE KNOWS FROM HIS CONVERSATIONS IN NEW YORK IN THE LAST DAY OR TWO THAT WE WILL NOT COUNTENANCE A TRIBUNAL. IT SHOULD, HOWEVER, BE POSSIBLE TO DEVISE A PUBLIC STATEMENT WHICH WOULD APPEAR A RESPONSIVE NEXT STEP IN WHAT THE IRANIANS WILL CONTINUE TO REGARD AS A BARGAINING PROCESS. FOR EXAMPLE, WE WOULD PUBLICLY ACKNOWLEDGE AGAIN OUR RECOGNITION THAT THE REVOLUTIONARY REGIME IS THE LEGAL GOVERNMENT AND THAT PUBLIC IRANIAN PROPERTY HAS PASSED FROM THE HANDS OF THE SHAH; THE US GOVERNMENT IS PREPARED TO INVESTIGATE PUBLIC IRANIAN HOLDINGS IN THE US, INCLUDING THE PAHLAVI FOUNDATION, TO ENSURE THAT IRANIAN PUBLIC PROPERTY PASSES TO ITS RIGHTFUL OWNER.

4. WHITLEY ALSO COMMENTED ON THE RELATED PROBLEMS OF BRINGING THE REVOLUTIONARY COUNCIL TO SEE OUR POINT OF VIEW AND THEN INDUCING IT TO CARRY THE MESSAGE FORCEFULLY TO KHOMEINI. IN OUR EFFORTS WITH THE REVOLUTIONARY COUNCIL, WHITLEY SUGGESTED THAT IT IS PARTICULARLY IMPORTANT TO SEEK OUT THOSE INDIVIDUALS WITH REAL POWER AND PROVEN LINKS TO KHOMEINI. MANY OF THESE, OF COURSE, SPEAK NO EUROPEAN LANGUAGE. WHITLEY SAID HE ASSUMED WE WERE USING SUCH ASSETS AS DUTCH FIRST SECRETARY ALFONSE HAMMER, WHOSE FARSI IS VIRTUALLY NATIVE, TO CARRY SPECIFIC US MESSAGES TO SUCH IMPORTANT FIGURES AS RAFSANJANI AND LAHUTI. THE FORMER SHOULD BE A SPECIAL TARGET FOR OUR EFFORTS TO PERSUADE; HE IS YOUNG, RUTHLESS, AMBITIOUS AND HAS ESTABLISHED ACCESS TO KHOMEINI.

5. ON THE RELATIONSHIP OF THE PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION TO THE HOSTAGE SITUATION, WHITLEY THINKS THAT IT WILL BE IMPORTANT FOR US TO OBSERVE WHO DOES NOT REPEAT NOT CHOOSE TO RUN. PRESUMABLY ALL CANDIDATES WILL RUN ON

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THE THEME THAT THEY ARE THE BEST EXECUTOR OF KHCMEJNI'S POLICY, AND IF BOTH BAHESHTI AND GHOTBZADEH DECLARE THEIR CANDIDACY, WE WILL HAVE A CAMPAIGN OF EACH OUTBIDDING THE OTHER, WHICH WILL NOT BE GOOD FOR US. GHOTBZADEH, IN WHITLEY'S VIEW, IS A VERY DANGEROUS MAN -- "A MASTER HYPOCRITE," WHO WANTS NOTHING BUT SUPREME POWER.

6. FINALLY, WHITLEY AGREED THAT THE UK AMBASSADOR'S VIEWS ARE THE MOST WORTH HAVING FROM THE TEHRAN DIPLOMATIC CORPS, BUT CAUTIONED THAT AS MESSENGERS, BRITISH DIPLOMATS ARE PERHAPS THE WORST CHOICE FOR US, SINCE IRANIANS REMAIN ALMOST AS SUSPICIOUS OF BRITAIN AS THEY ARE OF THE US. WE SHOULD USE REPRESENTATIVES OF SMALLER COUNTRIES, CHOSEN NOT BY RANK BUT BY ABILITY AND FLUENCY IN FARSI.
BREWSTER

END OF MESSAGE

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