

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~49
Action

CONTROL: 16813

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RECD: JANUARY 21, 1966 10:00 AM

Info

FROM: MADRID

ACTION: SECSTATE IMMEDIATE 869

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~ JANUARY 21

LIMDIS

REF DEPTTEL 838

1. WITH REFERENCE EFFECT OF B-52/KC-135 ACCIDENT ON US-SPANISH RELATIONS, WE HAVE BEEN IN CLOSE AND CONTINUOUS CONTACT WITH FONOFF SINCE MONDAY AND HAVE DETECTED NO APPRECIABLE TENSION SO FAR. ITEMS:

A. IN LONG DISCUSSIONS AT SAGAZ LEVEL JANUARY 19 AND 20 ON PUBLIC ANNOUNCEMENTS ATMOSPHERE PRIMARILY ONE OF COMMON CONCERN OVER PROBLEM CONFRONTING BOTH COUNTRIES; NO EXPLICIT OR IMPLIED RESENTMENT DIRECTED AT US. FOCUS OF FONOFF INTEREST APPEARED BE EFFECT ON SPANISH OPINION OF PUBLIC REVELATION NUCLEAR-ARMED US BOMBERS OPERATING IN SPANISH AIR SPACE. SAGAZ ALSO MENTIONED, WITHOUT GREAT STRESS, THAT SENSATIONAL STORIES ABOUT MISSING BOMBS AND RADIATION COULD EXCITE SPANISH PUBLIC, WHICH UNSOPHISTICATED IN SUCH MATTERS, TO EXAGGERATED REACTION. SOME FONOFF OFFICIALS AT LOWER LEVEL DID EXPRESS SURPRISE THAT "RISKY" REFUELING OPERATION SHOULD BE CARRIED OUT OVER LAND RATHER THAN SEA.

B. AMBASSADOR WAS REQUESTED TO CALL ON FONMIN JANUARY 20 (EMBTTEL 865) AND HAD LENGTHY, UNHURRIED DISCUSSION. QUESTION OF NATO USE JOINT BASES HERE AND GIBRALTAR DEFINITELY DOMINATED CONVERSATION AND TOOK MARKED PRECEDENCE OVER REMARKS EXCHANGED ON BOMBER ACCIDENT. THRUST OF FONMIN'S COMMENT LATTER SUBJECT WAS CONCERN OVER EFFECT ON SPANISH PUBLIC OPINION OF NEWSPAPER STORIES AND HE SPOKE IN TERMS OF US-SPANISH COLLABORATION TO CONTAIN REPERCUSSIONS.

C. THERE HAVE BEEN NO OTHER APPROACHES ON PART SPANISH CIVILIAN AUTHORITIES (SUCH AS MININFO) TO EMBASSY ON THIS SUBJECT.

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