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Gorbachev - IGC [International Green Cross]

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E.O. 12356: N/A

TAGS: SENV, AORC, UNEP, EAID, KSCA

SUBJECT: GORBACHEV OPENS INTERNATIONAL GREEN CROSS
- GENEVA OFFICE

REF: A) GENEVA 4526; B) THE HAGUE 3593

1. INTERNATIONAL GREEN CROSS (IGC) PRESIDENT MIKHAIL GORBACHEV AND HIS WIFE RAISA OFFICIALLY OPENED THE GENEVA OFFICE OF THE IGC JUNE 19. THE OFFICE IS LOCATED ON THE CAMPUS OF THE INTERNATIONAL ACADEMY OF THE ENVIRONMENT IN A FORMER MANOR HOUSE ONCE OCCUPIED BY THE UN CONFERENCE ON ENVIRONMENT AND DEVELOPMENT (UNCED) SECRETARIAT. IT IS INTENDED AS THE SITE OF THE IGC'S 24-HOUR ALARM CENTER, WHICH WILL FACILITATE "VIGOROUS, TIMELY AND EFFECTIVE RESPONSE TO PRESENT AND IMPENDING MAN-MADE ENVIRONMENTAL DISASTERS AND TO RECOMMEND CHANGES NEEDED TO MITIGATE AND PREVENT SUCH DISASTERS," ACCORDING TO THE IGC CHARTER (REFTEL A). (THE OFFICIAL SEAT OF THE IGC IS THE HAGUE; THE OFFICE THERE, WHICH GORBACHEV OPENED ON MAY 23 (REFTEL B), WILL CONCENTRATE ON PROMOTING "VALUE CHANGE," ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION, AND THE DEVELOPMENT OF AN INTERNATIONAL ECOLOGICAL LAW.)

2. THE GORBACHEVS TOURED THE OFFICES AND THE NEARBY ACADEMY CLASSROOMS ACCOMPANIED BY FORMER SWISS PRESIDENT RENE FELBER, IGC VICE PRESIDENT AKIO MATSUMURA (JAPAN) AND EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR ROLAND WIEDERKEHR (SWITZERLAND), AND OFFICIALS OF THE CITY AND CANTON OF GENEVA. IN REMARKS BEFORE GENEVA MISSION ENVOFFS AND SOME 100 OTHER GUESTS, GORBACHEV STRESSED THE ROLE OF THE IGC IN STIMULATING VALUE CHANGE AND, THROUGH NATIONAL AND LOCAL CHAPTERS, GRASSROOTS INVOLVEMENT. HE NOTED ITS ABILITY, AS A NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATION, TO ENHANCE AND SUPPLEMENT EXISTING NATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL PROGRAMS. AS A POSTSCRIPT, HE READ THE TEXT OF A LETTER HE HAD WRITTEN JUNE 9 TO PRESIDENT CLINTON, URGING HIM NOT TO ALLOW EVEN A LIMITED RESUMPTION OF NUCLEAR TESTING. HE NOTED THAT SUCH A RESUMPTION COULD "SERIOUSLY UNDERMINE" EFFORTS TO HAVE UKRAINE ADHERE TO

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THE NON-PROLIFERATION TREATY AND THE FORMER USSR STATES TO SIGN THE START TREATY. IT WOULD ALSO ENCOURAGE RUSSIA TO CONDUCT MORE TESTS AT NOVAYA ZEMLYA, WITH POTENTIALLY DISASTROUS ECOLOGICAL CONSEQUENCES (TEXT OF LETTER PROVIDED TO ACDA-GENEVA).

3. THE GORBACHEVS' VISIT WAS PART OF A FOUR-DAY TOUR OF SWITZERLAND ORGANIZED BY WINTERTHUR INSURANCE COMPANY. OTHER STOPS INCLUDED THE SWISS FEDERAL PARLIAMENT, THE CRAN-MONTANA FORUM, AND A MEETING WITH SWISS AND INTERNATIONAL ENVIRONMENTAL NGO'S HELD ON BOARD A TRAIN EN ROUTE FROM SION TO BERN. GORBACHEV IS RUMORED TO HAVE BEEN HIGHLY PAID FOR HIS APPEARANCES.

4. THE INAUGURATION CEREMONY LEFT MANY QUESTIONS UNANSWERED, PARTICULARLY THE FUNDING FOR THE IGC AND THE POSSIBLE FUTURE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE IGC AND THE UN CENTER FOR URGENT ENVIRONMENTAL ASSISTANCE (UNCUEA). THE FACT THAT NO INCUMBENT SWISS GOVERNMENT REPRESENTATIVE ATTENDED (APART FROM SWISS MISSION ENVOFF) CAN BE TAKEN AS AN INDICATION THAT BERN IS NOT YET WILLING TO THROW ITS SUPPORT TO THE IGC. SWISS MISSION ENVOFF AND PRESS REPORTS INDICATE BERN HAS THUS FAR REFUSED TO GRANT THE IGC'S REQUEST FOR 15 MILLION SFR (CURRENTLY, 1.48 SFR - 1 USD) OVER FIVE YEARS BECAUSE THE IGC HAS FAILED TO SUBMIT A DETAILED BUDGET AND BECAUSE BERN FEARS A DUPLICATION OF EFFORT WITH UNCUEA. IN A CONVERSATION WITH ENVOFF AFTER THE CEREMONY, WIEDERKEHR ALLOWED THAT FINANCING WAS INDEED A PROBLEM. HE ADDED THAT HE DID NOT THINK THAT ANY SIGNIFICANT FUNDING HAD COME FROM THE AMERICAN PRIVATE

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SECTOR THUS FAR, ALTHOUGH THERE HAD BEEN SOME ENQUIRIES. UNCUEA COORDINATOR ALAIN CLERC, WHO ATTENDED THE CEREMONY, TOLD ENVOFF AFTERWARDS THAT HE WAS DISAPPOINTED THAT UNCUEA WAS NOT MENTIONED. HE SAID HE DID NOT SEE THE IGC AS MUCH OF A COMPETITOR, BECAUSE HE BELIEVES IT WILL BE A LONG TIME BEFORE THE IGC ALARM CENTER BECOMES OPERATIONAL. (TEXT OF JOURNAL DE GENEVE EDITORIAL NOTING POTENTIAL FOR UNCUEA/IGC DUPLICATION REPORTED SEPTTEL.)

5. AN ASSOCIATE OF WIEDERKEHR TOLD ENVOFF THAT THE ASPEN INSTITUTE AND THE ALBERT SCHWEITZER INSTITUTE HAVE OFFERED TO HELP ESTABLISH A U.S. GREEN CROSS CHAPTER.

6. RUSSIAN MISSION ECON/ENVOFF TOLD ENVOFF HE WAS SURPRISED TO SEE MOST OF THE SENIOR STAFF OF HIS MISSION AT THE CEREMONY. HE SAID THAT GORBACHEV NOW HAD THE UNIQUE ATTRIBUTE OF BEING DESPISED BY ALL SIDES IN RUSSIA.

7. BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE: DESPITE THE FACT THAT THE GORBACHEVS REPORTEDLY COMPLAINED OF EXTREME EXHAUSTION EARLIER IN THE DAY, BOTH APPEARED TO BE IN EXCELLENT HEALTH AT THE LATE AFTERNOON CEREMONY; YOUNGER, IF ANYTHING, THAN IN RECENT PRESS PHOTOS. MR. GORBACHEV HAD WHAT APPEARED TO BE A SCAB SURROUNDED BY A RED AREA ROUGHLY 1 CM IN DIAMETER BELOW AND TO THE REAR OF HIS

LEFT EAR, POSSIBLY A RAZOR BURN OR INSECT BITE.

8. THIS MESSAGE HAS BEEN CLEARED BY EMBASSY BERN.

RODGERS

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