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PASS: [REDACTED]

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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

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DIST: 17 APRIL 2001

COUNTRY: CHINA

SUBJ: APPRAISAL OF THE SITUATION: CHINESE LEADERSHIP PERSPECTIVES ON THE EFFECTS OF THE 1 APRIL COLLISION OF A U.S. EP-3 AIRCRAFT AND A CHINESE F-8-II FIGHTER

DOI: [REDACTED]

SOURCE: [REDACTED]

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SUMMARY: NONE.

TEXT: 1. SINCE THE 12 APRIL 2001 RELEASE OF THE U.S. EP-3 CREW DETAINED IN CHINA FOLLOWING THE 01 APRIL COLLISION OF THE EP-3 AND A CHINESE F-8-II FIGHTER, THE CHINESE LEADERSHIP'S FOCUS IN THE SHORT-TERM HAS TURNED TO THE PLANNED 18 APRIL 2001 SPECIAL MEETING WITH THE UNITED STATES TO DISCUSS THE EP-3 INCIDENT. CHINESE NEGOTIATION TACTICS FOR THE 18 APRIL MEETING WILL PROBABLY RESEMBLE PAST CHINESE TECHNIQUES, WITH THE CHINESE PUSHING THE LIMITS FOR U.S. ACCEPTANCE OF RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE EP-3 INCIDENT, DESPITE LIKELY INTERNAL SENIOR CHINESE LEADERSHIP RECOGNITION THAT THIS INCIDENT WAS CAUSED BY THE CHINESE PILOT. THE NEGOTIATIONS WILL PROBABLY BEGIN WITH STRONG RHETORIC AND A LITANY OF U.S. MISTAKES BEFORE THE CHINESE SIDE SETTLES INTO MORE SUBSTANTIVE AND REALISTIC EXCHANGE WITH THE U.S. TEAM. THE ATTENTION OF THE CHINESE LEADERSHIP ALSO IS FOCUSED ON THE POSSIBLE LONGER-TERM EFFECTS OF THE COLLISION ON SINO-U.S. RELATIONS. WHILE THERE HAVE BEEN INDICATIONS OF A REALIZATION AND EMERGING CONCERN AMONG CHINESE OFFICIALS THAT THERE MAY BE SOME FORM OF U.S. RETALIATION RELATED TO THE COLLISION, OVERALL, THE CHINESE LEADERSHIP CONTINUES TO BELIEVE THAT LONG-TERM SINO-U.S. RELATIONS WILL NOT BE SEVERELY AFFECTED.

2. THE VIEWS OF CHINA'S LEADERS ARE OFTEN REFLECTED IN CHINA'S STATE-CONTROLLED MEDIA. AS OF 16 APRIL 2001, CHINA'S PRESS HAS BEEN MODERATE IN THEIR COVERAGE OF THE RELEASE OF THE U.S. AIRCREW. WHILE THE CHINESE MEDIA CONTINUES TO CITE THE OFFICIAL CHINESE VERSION OF THE COLLISION INCIDENT, THE CUSTOMARY STRONG RHETORIC AND ATTACKS AGAINST THE UNITED STATES HAVE BEEN ABSENT. THE CHINESE PRESS ALSO HAS HIGHLIGHTED THAT, DESPITE THE RELEASE OF THE U.S. CREW, THE CHINESE EXPECT ONGOING DISCUSSIONS AND NEGOTIATIONS TO FOCUS ON ACCOUNTABILITY AND U.S. RECONNAISSANCE FLIGHTS NEAR CHINA. CHINESE OFFICIAL AND PRESS STATEMENTS HAVE ALLUDED TO A WISH FOR STABLE, LONG-TERM BILATERAL RELATIONS AND A DESIRE FOR THE UNITED STATES TO

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NOT LINK THIS INCIDENT TO OTHER BILATERAL ISSUES, SUCH AS TRADE AND THE UPCOMING U.S. DECISION REGARDING MILITARY SALES TO TAIWAN.

3. CHINESE PRESIDENT ((JIANG)) ZEMIN, WHO IS EXPECTED TO RETURN TO CHINA FROM HIS LATIN AMERICA TRIP CIRCA 17 APRIL, WILL LIKELY CONTINUE HIS BEHIND-THE-SCENES ROLE IN NEGOTIATIONS OVER THE COLLISION INCIDENT AND ALLOW THE CHINESE MILITARY CONTINUE TO TAKE THE LEAD IN PUSHING FOR THE DISCONTINUATION OF U.S. RECONNAISSANCE FLIGHTS. THE CHINESE RECOGNIZE THE UNITED STATES IS UNLIKELY TO AGREE TO THIS REQUEST BUT WILL PUSH IN THIS DIRECTION DURING EARLY NEGOTIATIONS TO ASSESS THE U.S. SIDE'S BOTTOM LINE POSITION WHILE THEY ADJUST THEIR REQUESTS ALONG THE WAY, LIKELY INCLUDING REQUESTS FOR FINANCIAL COMPENSATION FOR THE EP-3 AIRCREW'S STAY IN HAIKOU AND OTHER EXPENSES RELATED TO THE COLLISION. THROUGHOUT THE PERIOD FOLLOWING THE 1 APRIL COLLISION, THE MOST EXTREME STATEMENTS ABOUT THE INCIDENT CAME FROM HARD-LINE PEOPLE'S LIBERATION ARMY (PLA) ENTITIES. JIANG USED HIS OVERSEAS TRAVEL TO PROTECT HIS MODERATE IMAGE WITH PLAUSIBLE DENIABILITY REGARDING DIRECT LINKAGE TO THOSE ADVOCATING A CHINESE HARD-LINE STANCE. AT THE SAME TIME, JIANG'S PUBLIC STATEMENTS ECHOING BOTH THE PLA'S AND CHINESE MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS (MFA)'S CALLS FOR AN APOLOGY, SERVED TO INSULATE HIM FROM INTERNAL CRITICISM IN THE HANDLING OF THIS SITUATION. IN ADDITION, JIANG'S BEHIND-THE-SCENES ROLE WOULD ALLOW HIM, SHOULD THERE BE FUTURE POLITICAL REPERCUSSIONS FROM THE U.S. GOVERNMENT REGARDING THIS INCIDENT, TO POINT TO THE PLA HARD-LINE ATTITUDE AS COUNTERPRODUCTIVE IN THE MANAGEMENT OF BILATERAL U.S.-SINO RELATIONS.

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COMMENTS, EVALUATIONS, AND REQUIREMENTS WELCOME.

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