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HANDLING INDICATOR

TO : Department of State

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DEPT
PASS : THE HAGUE, GEORGETOWN
THE HAGUE-1
GEORGETOWN-1

RM/AN
ANALYSIS & DISTRIBUTION
BRANCH

FROM : Amconsul PARAMARIBO

DATE: April 29, 1966

SUBJECT: Boundary Dispute Between Surinam and British Guiana

REF :

There is given below, in informal translation, the text of a statement on the question of the boundary dispute between Surinam and British Guiana presented to the Staten by Prime Minister Johan PENGEL on April 26, 1966 as reported in the press (there is no official, public report of Staten proceedings).

"The Government of Surinam:

"Considering:

1. that the United Kingdom has a wrong opinion about the course of the Corantijne River, which results in a boundary dispute between Surinam and British Guiana;
2. that British Guiana will become independent on May 26, 1966 and that up to that moment the United Kingdom is responsible for the acts and conduct of British Guiana in relation to the sovereign rights of Surinam on its territory;
3. that the United Kingdom, although initially had proposed to discuss the matter with the Kingdom of the Netherlands in order to arrive to a solution of the above boundary dispute, at present, notwithstanding the Kingdom of the Netherlands on Surinam's behest has expressed the desire to discuss the question on an adequate level and has urgently done so, up to now has not received a positive promise for these

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In Out

Drafted by: EKuppinger:eb 4/28/66

Contents and Classification Approved by: EDKuppinger

Clearances:

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discussions;

4. that the passive attitude of the United Kingdom, in view of the forthcoming granting of independence to British Guiana, is not in accordance with the applicable international judicial standards and customs;
5. that Surinam previously already has stated that violations of the sovereignty rights on its territory when independence is granted to British Guiana will be considered serious and will powerfully oppose any judicial and factual violation of its sovereignty rights;
6. that the attitude of the United Kingdom seriously endangers the good neighborhood relations showed by Surinam to British Guiana and its subjects with regards to the Corantijne River.

DECLARES:

If the United Kingdom does not positively declare its willingness to solve the disagreement mentioned and to discuss it on an adequate level prior to the granting of independence to British Guiana, it (the Surinam Government) will take all judicial and legal measures at its service to assure its sovereignty rights on its territory. DE WEST, 4/26/66"

In the ensuing discussion leaders of all parties represented in the Staten, those in the Government coalition as well as those in opposition, indicated their support of the statement. Thus, while no actual vote was taken, the statement may be accepted as a broadly supported Government position.

This matter has assumed rather sudden importance in Surinam eyes in view of impending British Guiana independence and the general feeling here that neither the Netherlands Government nor the British Government is interested in coming to grips with the issue. The general Surinam view, indicated in press comment excerpted below, is that Surinam will be in a disadvantageous position with regard to this matter if it is not settled prior to BG independence. There were rumors, following the visit here of Prime Minister BURNHAM of BG several months ago, that some sort of modus vivendi had been worked out between the two Prime Ministers. If that was the case something may have gone wrong. However that may be, the fact that there seems to be no indication that the metropolitan powers are likely to come to issue over the matter prior to BG independence has now imbued the issue with a sense of urgency apparent in the Surinam statement and press comment.

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The independent afternoon paper SURINAME which supports the "independence" movement, inquired why the situation had been permitted to remain quiescent for so long and questioned the justice of placing the onus of the declaration upon the United Kingdom alone saying, in effect, that greater blame should attach to the Netherlands which had not wanted to push the matter with the UK to the point where it would become an irritant factor in Netherlands-UK relations. The comment concluded by asserting that the history of this matter shows that the Netherlands will not stand up for Surinam in matters where its own other interests may be affected.

The independent DE WARE TIJD, noting the fact that the acknowledged boundary between Surinam and British Guiana is the west bank of the Corantijn River, suggested that Surinam could withhold permission for fishing and lumbering on the islands from British Guiana. Foreign Minister LUNS was criticized for discussing this matter, on his recent visit to London, with a secondary official rather than with his opposite number. The comment added that because of scandalous disregard of Surinam interests during the colonial period, this situation now has grown into a difficult problem. Referring again to the matter of jurisdiction over the Corantijn, the comment stated that Surinam "held good cards in this game" and, in effect, called upon the Netherlands to patrol the river if that should become necessary. Emphasizing the need for action before the May 26 date of British Guiana independence, the comment concluded that the fact of independence would give BG a good card in its hand since as an independent state in Latin America, the sympathies of the Latin/American countries would go to BG rather than to a "semi-colonial" area of a European power.

KUPPINGER *EDK*

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