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TEXT

TAGS: PREL, PGOV, AU
SUBJECT: FOREIGN MINISTER PRESS CONFERENCE - APRIL 25

1. SUMMARY:

FOREIGN MINISTER LEOPOLD GRATZ HELD AN UNUSUAL PRESS CONFERENCE ON APRIL 25, POSSIBLY MOTIVATED BY PRESIDENTIAL CAMPAIGN CONSIDERATIONS. HE DISCUSSED SEVERAL SUBJECTS INCLUDING THE JUSTICE DEPARTMENT INVESTIGATION OF WALDHEIM; AMBASSADOR LAUDER'S COMMENTS ON MISSILES FOR AUSTRIA AND THE SOCIALIST-COMMUNIST RELATIONSHIP. END SUMMARY.

2. WALDHEIM:

GRATZ ASSERTED THAT THE MFA HAD NOT BEEN INFORMED THAT THE OFFICE OF SPECIAL INVESTIGATIONS OF THE JUSTICE DEPARTMENT HAD RECOMMENDED THAT **KURT WALDHEIM** BE PLACED ON A LOOKOUT LIST BECAUSE OF COMPLICITY IN WAR CRIMES. THE FOREIGN MINISTER SAID HE HAD INSTRUCTED HIS AMBASSADOR IN WASHINGTON TO LOOK INTO THE MATTER. (GRATZ SAID HE HAD HEARD ONLY ABOUT THE REQUEST PUT TO THE DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE, NOT ABOUT THE DECISION TO TAKE

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UP THE CASE.) IF THE NEWS TURNED OUT TO BE ACCURATE, AUSTRIA WOULD ACT TO FULFILL ITS CONSULAR OBLIGATIONS TO PROTECT WALDHEIM'S INTERESTS, AS IT WOULD FOR ANY AUSTRIAN CITIZEN. GRATZ STRESSED, HOWEVER, THAT IT WOULD BE BETTER TO HAVE AS PRESIDENT OF AUSTRIA SOMEONE WHO WOULD NOT NEED SUCH DEFENSE.

3. LAUDER:

ASKED ABOUT HIS OPINION ON THE RECENT PRESS STATEMENT OF AMBASSADOR LAUDER SUPPORTING THE PROCUREMENT OF MISSILES FOR THE AUSTRIAN ARMY, GRATZ EXPLAINED THAT HE WOULD DISCUSS THE STATEMENT, WHICH LAUDER HAD MADE "EVEN BEFORE HAVING COME TO AUSTRIA", AT HIS MEETING WITH THE AMBASSADOR ON APRIL 29.

4. SOCIALIST-COMMUNIST RELATIONS:

IN RESPONSE TO A QUESTION ABOUT RECENT JOINT DEMONSTRATIONS OF SOCIALIST PARTY (SPO) YOUTH ORGANIZATIONS AND COMMUNIST ORGANIZATIONS AGAINST THE U.S. BOMBING OF LIBYA, GRATZ REITERATED HIS CONDEMNATION OF SUCH COOPERATION, WHICH VIOLATED THE SPO'S PRINCIPLE OF NOT COOPERATING WITH COMMUNIST ORGANIZATIONS AS LAID DOWN IN SEVERAL RESOLUTIONS AND DECISIONS OF THE PARTY. HE ANNOUNCED HE WOULD BRING UP THE MATTER AT THE NEXT SPO EXECUTIVE BOARD MEETING. JANKOWITSCH, THE SPO INTERNATIONAL SECRETARY, ADDED THAT THE SPO AS A MATTER OF POLICY WOULD NOT ACCEPT INVITATIONS TO COMMUNIST PARTY CONGRESSES, BE IT IN WESTERN OR EASTERN EUROPE.

5. PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS:

GRATZ EXPLAINED IT WAS CLEAR THAT, AS FOREIGN MINISTER, HE WOULD RESPECT AS HEAD OF STATE WHOEVER WAS ELECTED PRESIDENT. AS AN SPO OFFICIAL, HE WOULD NOT COMMENT ON THE AFFAIR WALDHEIM WHILE HE WAS ABROAD. IN AUSTRIA, HOWEVER, HE COULD EXPRESS HIS UNDERSTANDING FOR FOREIGN INTEREST IN QUESTIONS ABOUT WALDHEIM'S PAST. FOR THE FIRST TIME IN THE HISTORY OF THE AUSTRIAN REPUBLIC, A PRESIDENTIAL RACE HAD IMPLICATIONS ON AUSTRIA'S RELATIONS WITH OTHER COUNTRIES. IN FACT, THE IMPACT COULD BE FELT IN AUSTRIA'S DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS. GRATZ STRESSED THAT THE SPO CANDIDATE KURT STEYRER WAS A CANDIDATE WHOSE CREDIBILITY AND TRUSTWORTHINESS WERE NOT IN DISPUTE EITHER IN AUSTRIA OR ABROAD.

6. ASKED WHETHER THE ATTACKS AGAINST WALDHEIM WERE DIRECTED AGAINST THE UN, GRATZ EXPLAINED THAT WALDHEIM'S ACTIVITY AS UN SECRETARY GENERAL CERTAINLY PLAYED A ROLE, SINCE IT WAS IN THAT FUNCTION THAT HE HAD BECOME WELL-KNOWN ABROAD. JANKOWITSCH ADDED THAT THE ATTACKS WERE DIRECTED MORE AGAINST WALDHEIM'S POLICIES AS UN OFFICIAL THAN AGAINST THE UN PER SE. IN ANY CASE, HE FELT THAT ANTI-PATHY TO THE UN OR TO WALDHEIM'S UN POLICIES WERE NOT THE MAIN REASON FOR THE ATTACKS AGAINST THE FORMER UN SECRETARY GENERAL WALDHEIM. BLOCH
END OF MESSAGE UNCLASSIFIED