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TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 9190
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DEFENSE FOR SECRETARY PERRY

STATE FOR EUR/SCE

E.O.12958: DECL:03/22/06
TAGS: OVIP (PERRY, WILLIAM), MARR, AL, PREL

SUBJECT: SCENESETTER FOR UPCOMING VISIT TO ALBANIA
(U)

1. (U) CLASSIFIED BY DRSMITH, CDA, AMEMBASSY
TIRANA. REASONS 1.5 (B) AND (D).

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2. (U) THE ALBANIANS AND THIS MISSION LOOK FORWARD
TO YOUR UPCOMING VISIT. UNDERSTANDING YOU WILL BE
BRIEFED FULLY ON ALBANIA AND ITS PLACE IN THE
REGION, WE WANT TO BRING TO YOUR ATTENTION A FEW
SPECIFIC POINTS.

DOMESTIC POLITICS

3. (U) ALL EYES AND EFFORTS ARE FIRMLY FOCUSED ON
PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS WHICH WILL OCCUR IN LATE
MAY OR EARLY JUNE. THE RULING DEMOCRATIC PARTY
(PD) SHOULD RUN ON ITS RECORD: SINCE ASSUMING
POWER AFTER DEMOCRATIC ELECTIONS OF MARCH 1992,

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PRESIDENT SALI BERISHA'S GOVERNMENT HAS UNDERTAKEN BOLD ECONOMIC REFORMS, COMPLETED A RADICAL MILITARY REORGANIZATION, REVAMPED THE COMMUNIST-ERA JUDICIAL SYSTEM, COMPLETELY REDISTRIBUTED AGRICULTURAL LAND, PRIVATIZED ALMOST ALL HOUSING, INTRODUCED A BILL OF (HUMAN) RIGHTS, AND PASSED LIBERAL INVESTMENT LAWS AND RELATED IMPLEMENTING LEGISLATION. THREE CROWNING FOREIGN POLICY ACHIEVEMENTS INCLUDE: THAT ALBANIA WAS ADMITTED TO THE COUNCIL OF EUROPE IN JULY 1995; THAT PRESIDENT BERISHA MET WITH PRESIDENT CLINTON IN WASHINGTON IN SEPTEMBER 1995; AND THAT PRESIDENT BERISHA HOSTED GREEK PRESIDENT STEPHANOPOULOS MARCH 21-22 CAPPING A LENGTHY WARMING TREND IN GREEK-ALBANIAN RELATIONS.

4. (U) THE DEMOCRATIC PARTY (PD) GOVERNMENT, LED BY PRIME MINISTER ALEKSANDER MEKSI, HAS A SOLID WORKING MAJORITY IN THE UNICAMERAL LEGISLATURE.

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THE MAJOR OPPOSITION PARTY, HEIRS OF THE FORMER COMMUNIST ALBANIAN LABOR PARTY, CHANGED ITS NAME TO THE SOCIALIST PARTY (PS) IN JUNE 1991. THE SOCIALISTS ENJOY SIGNIFICANT SUPPORT AND HAVE A FORMIDABLE ORGANIZATION AT THE LOCAL LEVEL. THEIR PARTY CHAIRMAN, EX-PRIME MINISTER FATOS NANO, REMAINS IN PRISON AFTER BEING JAILED IN 1993 ON CHARGES OF CORRUPTION DURING HIS THREE-MONTH TENURE IN 1991. THIS HAS BECOME A HUMAN RIGHTS ISSUE AS MANY ALBANIANS AS WELL AS INTERNATIONAL OBSERVERS CONSIDER HIM A POLITICAL PRISONER. THE GOVERNMENT HAS PASSED A BROAD "LUSTRATION" LAW THAT SEEKS TO PREVENT EX-COMMUNISTS AND OTHERS WHO COLLABORATED WITH THE OLD REGIME FROM HOLDING PUBLIC AND APPOINTED OFFICE.

5. (C) SINCE THE 1992 ELECTIONS, THE DEMOCRATIC PARTY HAS SUFFERED A SERIES OF DIFFICULTIES, BEGINNING WITH THE EXPULSION OF SEVERAL OF ITS PROMINENT MEMBERS, WHO WENT ON TO FORM SMALL BUT INFLUENTIAL OPPOSITION PARTIES. THE PD ALSO DID POORLY IN JULY 1992 LOCAL ELECTIONS. THE FAILURE OF A REFERENDUM TO APPROVE A NEW CONSTITUTION N NOVEMBER 1994 WAS A MAJOR BLOW TO THE PARTY, PRECIPITATING A CABINET RESHUFFLE AND EVENTUALLY THE EXPULSION OF PARTY CHAIRMAN EDUARD SELAMI. THE PARTY SEEMS TO HAVE RECOVERED ITS EQUILIBRIUM FROM THAT DEFEAT AND THE INTERNAL DISPUTES IT CREATED OR EXACERBATED. IN RECENT RELIABLE OPINION POLLS, THE

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PD APPEARS TO REMAIN QUITE STRONG RELATIVE TO THE PS.

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6. (C) MANY OBSERVERS, BOTH WITHIN AND OUTSIDE OF THE PD, PREDICT THE PD WILL HAVE A NEARLY IMPOSSIBLE TASK RETAINING A MAJORITY IN PARLIAMENT. DESPITE THE TREMENDOUS ECONOMIC GROWTH OCCASIONED BY THE BERISHA GOVERNMENT'S "SHOCK THERAPY," CONCOMITANT CORRUPTION, BUREAUCRATIC INEPTITUDE, AND CONTINUING INTERRUPTIONS IN WATER AND ELECTRICITY SUPPLIES HAVE DISILLUSIONED MANY VOTERS IMPATIENT TO ACHIEVE A "WESTERN" STANDARD OF LIVING AND POLITICAL DISCOURSE. OTHER OBSERVERS CITE SHORTCOMINGS IN THE AREA OF DEMOCRATIZATION AS ANOTHER REASON FOR VOTER DISAPPOINTMENT WITH THE PD. (SEE SECTION ON DEMOCRATIZATION, BELOW.)

MILITARY

7. (C) THE ALBANIAN MILITARY CONTINUES IN ITS EFFORTS TO ESTABLISH AND MAINTAIN A WESTERN STYLE, DEMOCRATIC MILITARY UNDER CIVILIAN CONTROL. THEY HAVE LITTLE IN THE WAY OF MILITARY CAPABILITIES,

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DEFENSE FOR SECRETARY PERRY

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BUT THEIR DESIRE FOR REFORM IS REAL. THEY HAVE BEEN CONSISTENTLY COOPERATIVE WITH ALL REQUESTS BY THE UNITED STATES. THE FIRST TO APPLY FOR FORMAL

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MEMBERSHIP IN NATO, THEY KNOW VERY WELL THAT THEY ARE NOT YET ALLIES, YET HAVE MANY TIMES TOLD US THEY WILL ACT AS IF THEY WERE. THEIR ACROSS-THE-BOARD COOPERATION, WHETHER ON OVERFLIGHTS, TEMPORARY BASING OF DRONES, OPERATIONAL ACCESS TO TERRITORIAL WATERS, AND ANY NUMBER OF NON-DEFENSE ISSUES SUGGESTS THAT THEY ARE AS GOOD AS THEIR WORD ON THIS.

8. (C) THE RECENT VISITS OF MINISTER OF DEFENSE ZHULALI TO THE U.S. HAVE BEEN SEEN HERE AS MAJOR POLITICAL ACCOMPLISHMENTS, AS HAS BEEN YOUR EARLIER VISIT TO ALBANIA. RECENT EXERCISES HAVE DEMONSTRATED OUR CONCRETE SUPPORT FOR THE ALBANIANS, AND SHOWED THEIR WILLINGNESS TO AID THE U.S. AS WELL. THE ALBANIANS WANT TO "GO AMERICAN", BUT IN THE MILITARY FIELD THEY FEEL THEY HAVE LITTLE MATERIALLY TO SHOW FOR ALL THEIR EFFORTS, GOOD WILL, AND COOPERATION. THE EXPANSION OF U.S. MILITARY ACTIVITY IN ALBANIA AND VISITS OF PRESIDENT BERISHA AND MINISTER ZHULALI TO WASHINGTON HIGHLIGHTED THIS ISSUE. ALTHOUGH WE DO NOT EXPECT THE MINISTER TO RAISE THE ISSUE, HE HAS AT TIMES FELT THAT HE HAS BEEN GIVEN CONFLICTING INFORMATION REGARDING COST, AVAILABILITY AND DELIVERY TERMS ON FMF AND DSAA-RELATED ITEMS.

9. (C) THE FOLLOWING IS A SUMMARY OF THE MAJOR MILITARY ACTIVITIES EXECUTED AND PLANNED FOR ALBANIA IN THE NEXT FEW MONTHS:

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- THE PROPOSED ALBANIAN NATIONAL TRAINING CENTER REMAINS AT THE TOP OF MINISTER ZHULALI'S WISH LIST. HE HAD HOPED SOMETHING TOWARD THE NTC COULD HAVE BEEN PROVIDED PRIOR TO THE ELECTIONS. HE NOW SEEMS TO UNDERSTAND THIS WILL NOT BE POSSIBLE. NEVERTHELESS, WE ANTICIPATE THIS SUBJECT WILL BE RAISED. THE INITIAL SITE SURVEY FOR THE BIZA AREA WAS HELD 18-20 MAR BY EUCOM/SETAF, AND COMSIXTHFLT IS SCHEDULED TO CONDUCT A SURVEY OF SAZAN ISLAND IN MID-APRIL.

- IMET HAS BEEN THE ONLY SAO ACTIVITY IN ALBANIA UNTIL THIS TIME. LATER THIS MONTH, AN SAO OFFICE WILL OPEN AT THE MINISTRY OF DEFENSE. THERE HAS BEEN MUCH INTEREST IN THE FMS/FMF PROCESS BY THE ALBANIANS. LOA'S FOR TWO 42' PATROL BOATS WERE DELIVERED TO MOD DURING FEBRUARY BWG. CONFUSION OVER TERMS HAS DELAYED EXECUTION. MINISTER ZHULALI MAY INQUIRE ABOUT OTHER LOA'S WHICH HAVE BEEN PROMISED.

- ALBANIA IS CURRENTLY THE NUMBER ONE RECIPIENT OF EXCESS DEFENSE ARTICLES. APPROXIMATELY 225 VEHICLES HAVE BEEN DELIVERED. DELIVERY OF AN ADDITIONAL 80 VEHICLES HAS BEGUN, AND 325 WERE INSPECTED THIS MONTH.

- THE MILITARY HOSPITAL WHICH WAS THE FOCUS OF "UJE KRISTAL" LAST SUMMER HAS BECOME AN ITEM OF INTEREST RECENTLY. THE MINISTER OF DEFENSE HAS RECENTLY REQUESTED ADDITIONAL WORK AT THE HOSPITAL TO

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IMPROVE THE SUPPLY OF WATER. ALTHOUGH THE EXERCISE MET ALL ITS OBJECTIVES, ALL SIDES WERE SOMEWHAT DISAPPOINTED THAT THE WATER SUPPLY WAS NOT INCREASED MORE THAN IT WAS.

- DR. DENNY LANE (COL USA RETIRED) HAS BEEN IN PLACE AS THE DEFENSE ADVISOR TO THE ALBANIAN MINISTER OF DEFENSE SINCE MAY 95. HIS CONTRACT IS CURRENTLY BEING WORKED FOR RENEWAL BY USEUCOM J-5 SHOP.

- USS LASALLE, WITH COMSIXTHFLT VADM PILLING

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EMBARKED, CONDUCTED A ONE DAY PORT CALL 26 DECEMBER 1995. MINISTER OF DEFENSE ZHULALI AND 40 ALBANIAN GUESTS WERE HOSTED TO A DINNER BY VADM PILLING. THE PORT CALL OF USS PORTLAND WAS CANCELLED IN LATE FEBRUARY DUE TO CONCERNS FROM THE RECENT FATAL CAR BOMBING IN TIRANA. USS TORTUGA IS SCHEDULED TO CONDUCT A PORT CALL IN DURRES 29-31 MAR.

- BETWEEN 29 NOVEMBER AND 03 DECEMBER, USMC

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PERSONNEL FROM 26 MEU (SOC) CONDUCTED UNILATERAL COLD WEATHER TRAINING IN ALBANIA IN PREPARATION FOR DEPLOYMENT TO IFOR. ADDITIONALLY, APPROXIMATELY

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350 MARINES FROM 22 MEU (SOC) CONDUCTED COLD

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WEATHER TRAINING NEAR DURRES IN LATE FEBRUARY.

- THE MILITARY LIAISON TEAM IS PLANNING TO CONDUCT APPROXIMATELY 120 TRAVELING CONTACT TEAM VISITS AND FAMILIARIZATION TOURS WITH ALBANIA DURING 1996. WHILE THE EVENTS COVER A WIDE RANGE OF TOPICS, AREAS OF SPECIAL EMPHASIS ARE PROFESSIONAL MILITARY EDUCATION, NCO DEVELOPMENT, TRAINING AND TRAINING MANAGEMENT, PEACEKEEPING, DISASTER RELIEF, AIR DEFENSE, THE NAVY, AND THE MILITARY HOSPITAL. IN JANUARY, THE MINISTER OF DEFENSE ASKED FOR INFORMATION ON TWO TOPICS: U.S. MILITARY RULES FOR EARLY RETIREMENT AND THE PROCESS OF MILITARY PERSONNEL DETAILING. BOTH OF THESE WERE SUBMITTED FOR OUT-OF-CYCLE JCTP EVENTS IN ORDER TO ANSWER THE MINISTER'S QUESTIONS.

- THE NAVAL HYDROGRAPHIC CHARTING PROJECT HAS BEEN ONGOING FOR NEARLY TWO YEARS. THE ENTIRE ALBANIAN COAST HAS BEEN CHARTED BY THE USNS LITTLEHALES. THE CHARTS HAVE BEEN TURNED OVER TO THE MINISTER OF DEFENSE BY RADM GAFFNEY. THE HYDROGRAPHIC EQUIPMENT WHICH WAS DELIVERED TO THE ALBANIANS WAS RETURNED TO USS LASALLE IN DECEMBER. PLANS ARE FOR IT TO BE SENT BACK TO ALBANIA LATER THIS YEAR WHEN THE ALBANIAN NAVY AND THE U.S. WILL CHART THE AREA INSIDE THE HARBORS OF SARANDA AND VLORA. THIS COOPERATION IS EXPECTED TO CONTINUE INTO THE FUTURE. CINCUSNAVEUR AND COMSIXTHFLT ARE CURRENTLY WORKING TO ARRANGE FOR THE TRANSFER OF A SHIP TO

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ALBANIA FOR OPERATIONS AS A HYDROGRAPHIC VESSEL.

- THE JOINT MILITARY CARTOGRAPHY PROJECT BETWEEN THE ALBANIAN INSTITUTE OF MILITARY TOPOGRAPHY AND THE U.S. DEFENSE MAPPING AGENCY HAS ALSO BEEN UNDERWAY FOR ABOUT 2 YEARS. PRESENTLY, ALBANIA IS PRODUCING TOPOGRAPHIC MAPS THAT WILL BE PURCHASED BY THE U.S. BOTH NATIONS ARE BENEFITING FROM THIS COOPERATION WHICH INVOLVES TRAINING, SOME SUPPLIES AND MUCH JOINT WORK. DMA PERSONNEL VISITED ALBANIA LAST WEEK TO COORDINATE THE CARTOGRAPHY PROJECT.

- CINCUSNAVEUR AND COMSIXTHFLT ARE ARRANGING FOR U.S. AIRCRAFT TO FLY ON A LOW LEVEL ROUTE IN ALBANIA. A TEAM IS PLANNING TO VISIT ALBANIA IN EARLY APRIL TO FINALIZE THE PLANS.

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- SENIOR VISITORS TO ALBANIA HAVE INCLUDED; USDP SLOCOMBE, DOD ASD NYE, STATE ASD HOLBROOKE, THE LATE DASD KRUEZEL, GEN SHALIKASHVILLI, GEN JOULWAN, ADM SMITH, GEN OAKS, GEN MADDOX, GEN JAMERSON, GEN CROUCH, VADM PILLING, GENERAL NIX, GENERAL BACA, AS WELL AS OTHER GENERAL OFFICERS IN CONJUNCTION WITH EXERCISES.

- MINISTER ZHULALI HAS INVITED GEN JOULWAN TO VISIT ALBANIA IN THE SPRING. ADDITIONALLY, GENERAL SHEEHAN WILL VISIT ALBANIA 09-10 APRIL.

- DEPUTY MINISTER OF DEFENSE MOISIU (WHO IS ALSO THE CHAIRMAN OF THE ALBANIAN ATLANTIC ASSOCIATION)

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

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HAS REQUESTED DOD FUNDING TO SUPPORT A CONFERENCE ON THE MARSHALL LEGACY IN NOVEMBER. IT IS NOT KNOWN IF THIS SUBJECT WILL BE DISCUSSED DURING YOUR BILATERAL MEETINGS.

THE ECONOMY

10. (C) ALBANIA'S ECONOMIC INFRASTRUCTURE IS THE LEAST DEVELOPED IN EUROPE, AND PRESIDENT BERISHA WAS CORRECT WHEN HE ONCE DESCRIBED ALBANIA AS "A THIRD-WORLD COUNTRY." THE DEMOCRATIC GOVERNMENT EMBARKED ON A PROGRAM OF "SHOCK THERAPY" THAT LED ALBANIA TO BE CONSIDERED SOMETHING OF THE STAR PUPIL OF THE IMF. THE AGREEMENT WITH THE IMF NOW HAS LAPSED, AND DISAGREEMENTS OVER SUCH ISSUES AS GROWING GOVERNMENT BUDGET DEFICITS AGGRAVATED BY ACROSS-THE-BOARD PAY RAISES FOR GOVERNMENT EMPLOYEES HAVE DELAYED A NEW AGREEMENT DIFFICULT. WHILE ALBANIA MET IMF GOALS IN THE INITIAL "STABILIZATION PHASE" AHEAD OF TIME AND BROUGHT INFLATION DOWN FROM 400 PER CENT TO NEAR ZERO

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TODAY, SOME TROUBLING SIGNS INDICATE A POSSIBLE
RISE IN INFLATION TO 9-15 PERCENT OR HIGHER IN
1996. THE ALBANIAN CURRENCY (LEK), WHICH HAS

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FLOATED AGAINST THE DOLLAR SINCE AUGUST 1992 IN A
RELATIVELY STABLE RANGE, BEGAN A MODERATE SLIDE
FOLLOWING SUSPENSION OF BOSNIA-RELATED SANCTIONS IN
LATE 1995 THAT SHOWS SIGNS OF CONTINUING THIS YEAR.
WITH THE NOTABLE EXCEPTION OF SOME BREAD, MOST
PRICES ARE NOW FREE OF CONTROLS. THE GOA
NEGOTIATED A MAJOR RESCHEDULING OF MOST OF ITS
FOREIGN DEBT IN MID-1995, ENABLING IT TO GET ON
HEALTHIER FINANCIAL FOOTING.

11. (U) INDUSTRIAL PRODUCTION SHOWED ITS FIRST
MODEST GAINS IN 1995 SINCE THE LOWS HIT IN 1991 AND
1992, AS THE EFFECTS OF PRIVATIZATION BEGIN TO TAKE
HOLD. AGRICULTURE, ALMOST TOTALLY IN PRIVATE HANDS
SINCE 1992, HAS CONTINUED TO REBOUND STRONGLY FROM
THE DRASTIC DECLINE IN THE EARLY STAGES OF THE
DEMOCRATIC TRANSITION AND USUALLY LEADS IN SECTOR
GROWTH. THE CONSTRUCTION SECTOR ALSO CONTINUES TO
DO WELL FOLLOWING STRONG GROWTH IN 1995.
PRIVATIZATION HAS BEEN PARTICULARLY SUCCESSFUL FOR
SMALL AND MEDIUM ENTERPRISES AND THE GOVERNMENT IS
NOW IMPLEMENTING AN AMBITIOUS MASS PRIVATIZATION

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PLAN TO SELL THE REMAINING MEDIUM AND LARGE ENTERPRISES. INITIAL RESULTS ARE PROMISING.

12. (C) THE ENTREPRENEURIAL SPIRIT IS EVERYWHERE, ALTHOUGH LARGE-SCALE INVESTMENT FROM OUTSIDE IS STILL HAMPERED A POORLY DEVELOPED AND UNEVENLY ADMINISTERED LEGAL AND JUDICIAL SYSTEM, UNRESOLVED QUESTIONS CONCERNING LAND TENURE, CORRUPTION, AND POOR INFRASTRUCTURE. UNEMPLOYMENT, WHILE

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DECLINING, REMAINS HIGH, PARTICULARLY IN THE CITIES AND THE NORTHERN DISTRICTS. MUCH OF THE VISIBLY VIBRANT COMMERCIAL AND RETAIL SECTORS IS BASED ON OVERSEAS REMITTANCES, WHERE SIGNS OF DECLINE PORTEND POORLY FOR THE LONG-TERM SUSTAINABILITY OF THESE SECTORS.

13. (C) DESPITE THE PROGRESS BEING MADE, ALBANIA IS STILL SOMEWHAT DEPENDENT ON FOREIGN AID. THE PRIMARY GOAL OF AMERICAN ASSISTANCE IS TO STRENGTHEN DEMOCRATIC INSTITUTIONS AND TO PROMOTE MARKETIZATION. IN ADDITION, WE HAVE SEVERAL PROGRAMS IN THE AGRICULTURAL SECTOR, WHERE NEARLY TWO-THIRDS OF THE POPULATION IS EMPLOYED. WE ALSO HAVE GIVEN SIGNIFICANT ASSISTANCE TO THE ECONOMIC RESTRUCTURING AND THE PRIVATIZATION EFFORTS. THE ALBANIAN AMERICAN ENTERPRISE FUND, FUNDED AT USD 30 MILLION OVER A SEVERAL-YEAR PERIOD, IS ACTIVELY INVESTING IN SMALL AND MEDIUM-SIZED ENTERPRISES.

DEMOCRATIZATION

14. (U) INSTITUTIONALIZATION OF DEMOCRATIC GAINS HAS BEGUN TO TAKE HOLD. THERE ARE DOZENS OF POLITICAL PARTIES (MANY OF THEM QUITE SMALL) AND OVER 200 NEWSPAPERS, MANY PARTY-AFFILIATED. THE ELECTRONIC MEDIA IS STILL CONTROLLED BY THE GOVERNMENT, VIA THE PARLIAMENT. HOWEVER, MOST URBAN COMMUNITIES DOWNLOAD AND REBROADCAST EUROPEAN TELEVISION LOCALLY. IN TIRANA, GERMAN, ENGLISH, ITALIAN, DUTCH, FRENCH AND AMERICAN NEWS AND

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PROGRAMMING ARE WIDELY AVAILABLE EITHER LOCALLY OR VIA SATELLITE.

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15. (U) WHILE REFORMS CONTINUE, THE BASIC STRUCTURES INSURING A DEMOCRATIC FORM OF GOVERNMENT ARE IN PLACE. DEVELOPMENT AND RATIFICATION OF A NEW CONSTITUTION HAS BEEN DELAYED BY THE GOVERNMENT'S LOSS OF A TWO-THIRDS MAJORITY IN PARLIAMENT AND THE FAILURE TO WIN A REFERENDUM DECISION. HOWEVER, THE "LAW ON BASIC CONSTITUTIONAL PROVISIONS," PASSED IN 1991, AND THE LAW ON "FUNDAMENTAL FREEDOMS AND HUMAN RIGHTS," PASSED IN THE SPRING OF 1993, PROVIDE AN ADEQUATE CONSTITUTIONAL-LEVEL UNDERPINNING FOR MOST HUMAN AND POLITICAL RIGHTS, PENDING PASSAGE OF A UNITARY DOCUMENT CONSTITUTION. A NEW CONSTITUTION IS NOT EXPECTED UNTIL AFTER THIS SPRING'S GENERAL ELECTIONS.

16. (C) THERE ARE STILL SOME DIFFICULTIES ON THE ROAD TO DEMOCRACY. 1995 SAW A SERIES OF STRUGGLES

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BETWEEN THE EXECUTIVE AND JUDICIAL BRANCHES. THE
HEAD OF THE SUPREME COURT WAS DISMISSED IN NOVEMBER
1995 BY PARLIAMENT AT PRESIDENT BERISHA'S REQUEST

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IN A MANNER WHICH WAS CONTRARY TO ALBANIA'S
CONSTITUTIONAL LAWS. THE JUDICIARY REMAINS
EXTREMELY WEAK, INEXPERIENCED, AND SUBJECT TO
CORRUPTION AS WELL AS EXECUTIVE PRESSURE. WE ARE
PREPARED TO REDOUBLE OUR EFFORTS TO ASSIST ALBANIA
TO CREATE A TRULY INDEPENDENT AND EFFECTIVE
JUDICIAL BRANCH, IN LINE WITH PRESIDENT BERISHA'S
DISCUSSIONS WITH PRESIDENT CLINTON IN SEPTEMBER,
1995, PENDING THE OUTCOME OF POLICY DISCUSSION IN
WASHINGTON.

17. (U) THE PARLIAMENT HAS PASSED A BROAD
"LUSTRATION" LAW THAT MAY EXCLUDE SEVERAL KEY
OPPOSITION LEADERS FROM POLITICAL LIFE UNTIL 2002,
BASED ON THEIR PRIOR SERVICE TO COMMUNIST REGIMES.
A COMMISSION HAS JUST BEEN FORMED TO "VET"
CANDIDATES FOR UPCOMING ELECTIONS. CANDIDATES WHOM
THE COMMISSION DECIDES WERE COMMUNIST OFFICIALS OR
COLLABORATORS MAY APPEAL TO THE CASSATION COURT.
SOME FEAR THIS LAW WILL BE ABUSED IN ORDER TO LIMIT
ELECTORAL PARTICIPATION BY OPPONENTS OF THE CURRENT
GOVERNMENT. IT WOULD PRESUMABLY DISQUALIFY SEVERAL
SOCIALIST PARTY LEADERS.

18. (U) RELIGIOUS FREEDOM IS GUARANTEED AND IS
BASICALLY RESPECTED IN ALBANIA, BUT ALL MAJOR
RELIGIOUS GROUPS IN ALBANIA COMPLAIN AT DELAYS IN
THE RESTITUTION OF RELIGIOUS PROPERTIES SEIZED BY
THE COMMUNISTS. IN DECEMBER 1995, PRESIDENT
BERISHA ANNOUNCED THE RETURN OF THE MONASTERY OF
ARDENITSA TO THE ALBANIAN AUTOCEPHALOUS ORTHODOX

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CHURCH.

19. (U) THE PRESS LAW INTRODUCED IN OCTOBER 1993
CONTAINS SOME CONTROVERSIAL PROVISIONS THAT
SOMEWHAT CONSTRAIN PRESS FREEDOM. JOURNALISTS HAVE
PERIODICALLY BEEN ARRESTED AND CHARGED UNDER
ALBANIA'S TOUGH ANTI-SLANDER LAWS. SOME PUBLISHERS

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COMPLAIN THAT THE GOVERNMENT IS PURPOSELY HARASSING THEM BECAUSE OF THEIR ANTI-GOVERNMENT STANCE. THEY ALSO ALLEGE HEAVY TAXES ARE HINDERING THEIR EFFORTS TO RUN PROFITABLE NEWSPAPERS.

20. (C) ON THE MORE POSITIVE SIDE, THE GOVERNMENT IN 1995 ENACTED MODERN PENAL AND PENAL PROCEDURES CODES, AND CIVIL AND CIVIL PROCEDURES CODES. IT HAS SET UP AN IMPRESSIVE SYSTEM FOR MINORITY EDUCATION AND PASSED A SECONDARY EDUCATION LAW PROVIDING FOR MOTHER TONGUE EDUCATION FOR MINORITY CHILDREN AND PRIVATE SCHOOLS. A LAW ON ELECTRONIC MEDIA, WHICH WILL REPORTEDLY PERMIT PRIVATE BROADCASTING, AWAITS PARLIAMENTARY ACTION.

FOREIGN POLICY

21. (C) ALBANIAN FOREIGN POLICY REMAINS FOCUSED ON ITS BALKAN NEIGHBORS, ACCESS TO EUROPEAN SECURITY INSTITUTIONS, AND RELATIONS WITH THE UNITED STATES. THE GOVERNMENT OF ALBANIA IS VERY CONCERNED WITH KOSOVO, PARTICULARLY IN THE POST-DAYTON AGREEMENT PERIOD. WHILE MAINTAINING A RESPONSIBLE AND NON-PROVOCATIVE POSITION, THE GOA HAS MADE IT CLEAR

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THAT THE STATUS AND TREATMENT OF THE ALBANIAN POPULATION IN KOSOVO IS ALBANIA'S NUMBER ONE "NATIONAL ISSUE." THERE IS A WIDESPREAD FEAR THAT THE STATUS OF KOSOVO MAY BE NEGLECTED IN THE WEST'S EAGERNESS TO PUT THE CONFLICT IN THE FORMER YUGOSLAVIA BEHIND IT. GOVERNMENTAL AND PUBLIC SUPPORT FOR IBRAHIM RUGOVA AND THE LDK REMAINS STRONG.

22. (U) BILATERAL RELATIONS WITH GREECE HAVE IMPROVED DRAMATICALLY WITH THE MARCH 21-22 VISIT OF GREEK PRESIDENT KOSTAS STEPHANOPOULOS TO TIRANA. DURING THAT VISIT, THE TWO COUNTRIES SIGNED A TREATY OF PEACE AND FRIENDSHIP AND DISCUSSED THE NEURALGIC BILATERAL ISSUES OF THE STATUS OF ALBANIAN REFUGEES IN GREECE AND MOTHER-TONGUE EDUCATION FOR THE GREEK MINORITY IN CERTAIN TOWNS IN SOUTHERN ALBANIA. THE STEPHANOPOULOS VISIT WAS THE CULMINATION OF A SERIES OF GREEK OFFICIAL VISITS SINCE THE GOA RELEASED FIVE GREEK MINORITY LEADERS FROM PRISON IN FEBRUARY 1995 AND CAPPED A

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ACTION EUR-01

INFO	LOG-00	AMAD-01	CIAE-00	SMEC-00	OASY-00	SRPP-00	EB-01
	FBIE-00	TEDE-00	INR-00	ADS-00	NSAE-00	PM-00	SSO-00
	SS-00	TRSE-00	SNIS-00	NISC-00	PMB-00	PRME-01	/004W

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O 261048Z MAR 96
 FM AMEMBASSY TIRANA
 TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 9195
 SECDEF WASHDC IMMEDIATE
 JOINT STAFF WASHDC//J-5//
 USCINCEUR VAHINGEN GE//ECJ5//
 INFO DIA WASHINGTON DC//DH-1//

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DEFENSE FOR SECRETARY PERRY

STATE FOR EUR/SCE

E.O.12958: DECL:03/22/06
TAGS: OVIP (PERRY, WILLIAM), MARR, AL, PREL

SUBJECT: SCENESETTER FOR UPCOMING VISIT TO ALBANIA
(U)

WARMING TREND TRACEABLE TO THAT EVENT.

23. (C) THE SITUATION OF THE GREEK MINORITY IN

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 SOUTHERN ALBANIA IS CALM. OSCE HIGH COMMISSIONER
 FOR NATIONAL MINORITIES MAX VAN DER STOEL HAS MADE
 SEVERAL TRIPS TO ALBANIA OVER THE PAST TWO YEARS
 AND SUPPORTS THE CONTENTION THAT THE ALBANIANS HAVE
 DONE A GREAT DEAL TO ASSURE THE MINORITY'S RIGHTS.
 HE IS ALSO CORRECT TO ASSERT THAT MORE COULD BE
 DONE, PARTICULARLY IN THE AREA OF EDUCATION. WE
 AGREE WITH THIS ANALYSIS AND HOPE THE GREEK
 PRESIDENT'S VISIT WILL CONTRIBUTE TO A LASTING
 RESOLUTION OF OUTSTANDING PROBLEMS.

24. (C) TIRANA'S RELATIONS WITH SKOPJE REMAIN

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REASONABLY FRIENDLY, DESPITE A MARCH 1995 INCIDENT IN WHICH AN ETHNIC ALBANIAN WAS KILLED BY FYROM POLICE DURING AN INCIDENT AT AN ETHNIC ALBANIAN-FOUNDED "UNIVERSITY" IN THE MACEDONIAN TOWN OF TETOVO. THE GOA REMAINS CONVINCED THAT A STABLE FYROM IS ESSENTIAL TO STABILITY IN THE BALKANS AND HAS REPEATEDLY ENCOURAGED THE ALBANIAN MINORITY'S CONTINUED PARTICIPATION IN THE FYROM GOVERNMENT. THE GOA IS COMFORTABLE WITH, AND SUPPORTIVE OF, THE PRESENCE OF U.S. TROOPS IN THE UNPREPDEP CONTINGENT STATIONED NEAR FYROM'S BORDER WITH SERBIA.

SMITH

~~XXXXXXXXXX~~
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