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FM AMEMBASSY BELGRADE
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 2481
INFO AMEMBASSY SARAJEVO
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 BELGRADE 001198

ROME ALSO FOR VATICAN
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E.O. 12958:DECL:03/11/02
TAGS: PGOV, PTER, SR
SUBJECT: KOSOVO TERRORISM: DO THE LOCALS
SEE AN OPPORTUNITY OR A PROBLEM?
(C-BT6-01254)

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UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF STATE
REVIEW AUTHORITY: FRANK TUMMINIA
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REF: BELGRADE 1066; BELGRADE 1078

1. (U) CLASSIFIED BY NICHOLAS HILL, POLITICAL OFFICER. REASON 1.5(B)

2. (C) SUMMARY: POLOFF VISITED THE SITE OF LAST WEEK'S EXPLOSION ON THE CAMPUS OF THE UNIVERSITY OF PRISTINA. THE BOMB SHATTERED GLASS IN ONE NEARBY BUILDING IN THE SHADOW OF THE UNIVERSITY LIBRARY, WHERE SERB STUDENTS CONGREGATE WHEN THE WEATHER IS WARM. TWO OTHER EXPLOSIVE DEVICES WERE FOUND ON THE SAME DAY, THE FIRST AT THE FOOT OF A SERBIAN MONUMENT ON THE UNIVERSITY'S CAMPUS; THE SECOND, IN THE SOUTHERN KOSOVO TOWN OF PRIZREN BESIDE A MONUMENT TO TSAR DUSAN. FEW IN KOSOVO'S ALBANIAN COMMUNITY EXPRESSED HEIGHTENED CONCERN. THE DEPUTY HEAD OF THE SERBIAN ADMINISTRATION TOLD POLOFF THAT THE EXPLOSIONS REFLECT THE TERRORIST TACK INCREASINGLY TAKEN BY ETHNIC ALBANIAN SEPARATISTS.
END SUMMARY

"WAR OF TERROR"

3. (C) "THE WAR OF TERROR CONTINUES," VELJKO ODALOVIC, DEPUTY HEAD OF THE SERBIAN ADMINISTRATION IN KOSOVO, TOLD POLOFF MARCH 6, THE DAY AFTER AN EXPLOSION ROCKED THE CAMPUS OF THE UNIVERSITY OF PRISTINA. ONE EXPLOSION DETONATED, HE SAID, AND TWO WERE DISCOVERED BEFORE THEY WENT OFF. HE SAID THAT POLICE HAD SUCCESSFULLY DEFUSED THE BOMBS, ONE NEAR THE EXPLOSION SITE AT THE UNIVERSITY OF PRISTINA, THE OTHER IN PRIZREN, IN SOUTHERN KOSOVO. ODALOVIC TOLD POLOFF THAT
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4. (C) THE PURPOSE OF THE RECENT TERRORISM IS OBVIOUS, HE ASSERTED. "TERRORISTS WANT TO UPSET LIFE IN KOSOVO AND THE INHABITANTS HERE." HE REPEATED WHAT THE SERBIAN RECTOR OF THE UNIVERSITY OF PRISTINA HAD SAID OF THE SCHOOL'S ENROLLMENT: THAT 14,000 OF THE 16,000 STUDENTS WERE NOT ORIGINALLY FROM KOSOVO. THE BOMBING, ODALOVIC SUGGESTED, WAS A "CALCULATED ACTION" TO DRIVE THESE STUDENTS OUT OF THE PROVINCE. HE ALLEGED THAT THERE ARE TERRORIST TRAINING BASES FOR THE KOSOVO LIBERATION ARMY IN ALBANIA--AND THAT THE MARCH 5 EXPLOSION LOOKS CONSISTENT WITH THE SORT OF WORK DONE BY VETERANS OF THESE BASES. HE ASSERTED THAT, DESPITE THE MASS ARRESTS IN LATE JANUARY AND EARLY FEBRUARY IN KOSOVO OF SUSPECTED TERRORISTS, TERRORISM IS A PROBLEM THAT IS HERE TO STAY.

ALBANIAN KOSOVAR LEADERSHIP:
DISINGENUOUS OR SINCERE?

5. (C) AS QUICKLY AS SERBIAN OFFICIALS IDENTIFY A TERRORISM PROBLEM IN KOSOVO, MANY ETHNIC ALBANIANS DISMISS IT WHEN THE ISSUE IS RAISED. LDK PRESIDENT RUGOVA TOLD POLOFF MARCH 6, AFTER THE MOST RECENT
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6. (C) PPK LEADER DEMACI AND LDK VICE PRESIDENT HYDAYET HYSENI SHARE SOME OF RUGOVA'S SKEPTICISM. HYSENI, HOWEVER, INDICATED TO POLOFF THAT HE IS

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7. (C) DEMACI TOO IS SKEPTICAL THAT THE KOSOVO LIBERATION ARMY WAS BEHIND LAST WEEK'S BOMBING. HE HAS SAID IN THE PAST THAT HE SAW SERBIAN FINGERPRINTS ALL OVER KOSOVO'S TERRORIST INCIDENTS. BUT THE DANGER THAT KOSOVO'S ALBANIAN COMMUNITY COULD BECOME MORE RADICAL IS REAL, HE SAID, WHICH IS ONE REASON HE ENTERED POLITICS. ACCORDING TO HYSENI, WHO TOLD POLOFF THAT HE SEES HIMSELF AS SOMETHING OF A BRIDGE BETWEEN RUGOVA AND DEMACI, THERE ARE SOME 300-400 THOUSAND YOUNG ALBANIANS IN WESTERN EUROPE WHO COULD EASILY COME UNDER THE INFLUENCE OF RADICAL SEPARATIST ORGANIZATIONS. THAT IS WHY, HE ASSERTED, HE AND DEMACI HAVE BEEN CALLING FOR A MORE ACTIVE POLICY AGAINST THE SERBIAN GOVERNMENT--AS A MEANS TO CHANNEL OPPOSITION ENERGY INTO PEACEFUL PROTEST.

KLA: SMOKING GUN FOUND?

8. (C) SPLASHED ON THE FRONT PAGE OF THE FEBRUARY 18 NEW YORK TIMES WAS A CHRIS HEDGES ARTICLE ABOUT THE KOSOVO LIBERATION ARMY. IN ONE TRIP TO KOSOVO HE HAD APPARENTLY FOUND AN ETHNIC ALBANIAN WHO WAS A MEMBER OF THE KLA. OVER COFFEE IN A CROWDED, SMOKE-FILLED CAFE IN A DILAPIDATED PRISTINA SHOPPING CENTER, 36-HOURS AFTER THE MOST RECENT BOMBING, POLOFF TALKED TO THE REPORTER'S INTERPRETER IN HOPES OF FINDING SOME LEADS AND POSSIBLY MORE INFORMATION. ACCORDING TO THE INTERPRETER, WHO HAD BEEN RECOMMENDED BY USIS TO THE TIMES REPORTER, AND IS KNOWN FOR HER HONESTY, HEDGES
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TOLD HER HE WANTED TO MEET A KLA MEMBER. WHEN THEY WENT TO TALK TO THE FAMILY OF ZAHIR PAJAZITI, AN ETHNIC ALBANIAN KILLED BY POLICE JANUARY 31, HEDGES ASKED IF THE 34-YEAR OLD HAD BEEN A MEMBER OF THE KLA. NO, HEDGES WAS TOLD, ACCORDING TO THE INTERPRETER.

9. (C) THE FAMILY SAID IT DID NOT KNOW WHAT PAJAZITI DID THAT KEPT HIM UP AT ODD HOURS OF THE NIGHT. DOES THE KLA EXIST, HEDGES ASKED? PROBABLY NOT, HE WAS TOLD. RECENT TERRORIST INCIDENTS, THEY SUGGESTED TO THE REPORTER, WERE PROBABLY STAGED BY THE SERBS TO DISCREDIT KOSOVO'S ALBANIAN COMMUNITY. YET NONE OF THESE DOUBTS LEAVENED HEDGES' ARTICLE, WHICH WAS AUTHORITATIVE IN IDENTIFYING A TERRORIST ORGANIZATION, IGNORING THE POSSIBILITY PAJAZITI COULD HAVE HAD OTHER NOCTURNAL PURSUITS, SUCH AS DRUG RUNNING. ACCORDING TO THE INTERPRETER, HE ALSO PLANTED A QUOTE BY ASKING PAJAZITI'S FATHER IF HE WERE PROUD THAT HIS SON DIED FIGHTING FOR KOSOVO'S LIBERATION. IF HE DIED FOR ANY OTHER REASON, HIS FATHER WAS NOT ABOUT TO SET THE RECORD STRAIGHT IN THIS INTERVIEW. YES, HE WAS PROUD OF HIS SON, HE SAID.

COMMENT

10. (C) TERRORISM HAS NOT HEIGHTENED TENSION PERCEPTIVELY IN KOSOVO IN RECENT WEEKS. DRIVING THROUGH RURAL AREAS THE POLICE PRESENCE REMAINS LIGHT. CHECKPOINTS ARE SCARCE--WITH THE ONE CONSTANT POLICE PRESENCE AT THE INTERSECTION OF THE ROAD LEADING TO
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PODUJEVO NORTH OF PRISTINA. THE SERBIAN ADMINISTRATION BUILDING IN PRISTINA, 24-HOURS AFTER THE MOST RECENT EXPLOSION, WAS ON APPEARANCES UNGUARDED ON POLOFF'S ARRIVAL FOR A MEETING, THE FRONT ENTRANCE LOBBY DESERTED. TERRORISM IS NOT ON THE MINDS OF ETHNIC ALBANIANS EITHER; SELDOM DOES THE TOPIC COME UP UNLESS IT IS RAISED. FEAR OF A POLICE CRACKDOWN--AND THE

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PROSPECT THAT TERRORISM IS MANUFACTURED BY THE SERBS TO FACILITATE A CRACKDOWN--IS, HOWEVER, REAL, IF IMPLAUSIBLE.

11. (C) THE PRESENCE OF LOW-LEVEL TERRORISM MAY IN FACT SUIT THE INTERESTS OF SOME IN KOSOVO. FOR THE SERBS, IT GIVES THEM THE WEDGE THEY NEED. THEY HAVE TURNED KOSOVO TERRORISM INTO A MANTRA; ETHNIC ALBANIAN SEPARATISTS ARE DANGEROUS AND DO NOT DESERVE THE SYMPATHY OF WESTERN GOVERNMENTS, CERTAINLY NOT OF THE U.S. FOR THE ETHNIC ALBANIANS THE PROBLEM IS MORE COMPLEX. TO THE EXTENT THAT TERRORISM KEEPS KOSOVO ON WESTERN RADAR SCREENS IT IS HELPFUL. IT ALSO HELPS ADEM DEMACI AND HIS SUPPORTERS MAKE THEIR CASE FOR A MORE ACTIVE, WHILE STILL PEACEFUL, FORM OF RESISTANCE TO SERBIAN RULE--AS A MEANS TO STEM RADICALIZATION OF THE MOVEMENT. FOR HIS PART, IF RUGOVA KNOWS ANYTHING ABOUT KOSOVO TERRORISM, HE IS NOT SAYING; IT WOULD BE POLITICAL SUICIDE TO COOPERATE WITH SERBIAN AUTHORITIES.

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12. (C) THE DEPARTMENT MAY WISH TO TAKE SERIOUSLY RUGOVA'S SUGGESTION THAT INTERPOL OR THE FBI OFFER THEIR ASSISTANCE TO SERBIAN AUTHORITIES INVESTIGATING TERRORISM IN KOSOVO. THE RECENT ARREST OF SCORES OF ETHNIC ALBANIANS ON CHARGES OF INCITING TERRORISM UNDERSCORES HOW THE SERBS MAY BE EFFECTIVE IN BEATING SUSPECTS UP, BUT WOEFULLY INCOMPETENT IN UNCOVERING PLAUSIBLE EVIDENCE THAT WOULD CONVICT IN, FOR EXAMPLE, A U.S. COURT. IF THE TERRORIST PROBLEM IS GENUINE, THE SERBS MAY WELCOME OUTSIDE ASSISTANCE. FOR RUGOVA'S PART, INTERNATIONAL ENGAGEMENT WOULD LEND SOME POLITICAL COVER TO COOPERATING IN THE STRUGGLE TO NIP TERRORISM IN THE BUD.

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13. (U) SARAJEVO MINIMIZE CONSIDERED.

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