

Message Text

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ACTION EB-11

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FM AMEMBASSY TOKYO

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 1363

C O N F I D E N T I A L TOKYO 5139

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EO 11652: GDS

TAGS: MILI US JA

SUBJ: IWO JIMA AND GESASHI LORAN A STATIONS

1. IT IS UNFORTUNATE THAT OUR 15111 AND 15499 OF LAST NOV ARE BEING USED AS BASIS FOR ARGUMENT THAT GOJ WILL ABANDON LORAN A SYSTEM BEFORE END OF 1977 AND MOVE TO SOME ALTERNATE SYSTEM, SINCE WE NOW ARE INFORMED AUTHORITATIVELY THAT GOJ PLANS CONTINUE LORAN A OPERATIONS WELL BEYOND 1977. EMBASSY REGRETS ANY CONFUSION OR MISUNDERSTANDING IN THIS REGARD WHICH OUR MESSAGES MAY HAVE CONVEYED TO WASHINGTON AGENCIES.

2. RECENT CHECKING WITH MSA VIA FONOFF HAS REVEALED THAT MSA PLANS TO MAINTAIN ITS LORAN A CHAIN, INCLUDING GESASHI AND IWO (IF USCG CEASES OPERATION OF THEM) THROUGH 1985 RPT 1985.

3. ALTHOUGH MSA DOES EVENTUALLY HOPE TO MOVE TO ALTERNATE SYSTEM (PROBABLY DECCA), PRESENT WIDESPREAD USE OF LORAN A COMBINED WITH COST OF CONVERSION TO DIFFERENT SYSTEM MAKE IT VIRTUALLY CERTAIN THAT MSA WILL HAVE TO MAINTAIN LORAN A NETWORK WELL BEYOND 1977. POLITICAL PRESSURE DERIVED FROM UNPOPULARITY OF MORE SOPHISTICATED FOLLOW-ON SYSTEMS (WHICH PRESENTLY REQUIRE EXPENSIVE COMPUTERS AND COMPLEX INTERPOLATION OF TABLES) FOR COMMERCIAL FISHERMEN AND PILOTS ACCUSTOMED TO LORAN A COULD CONVEIVABLY FORCE MSA EVEN TO POSTPONE CONVERSION TARGET OF 1985.

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4. SINCE BOTH IWO AND GESASHI ARE INTEGRAL PARTS OF EXISTING JAPAN-AREA LORAN A SYSTEM, MSA MUST PICK UP OPERATION OF THE TWO STATIONS AT SOME POINT, WHETHER OR NOT USCG CONTINUES OPERATION THROUGH 1977.

5. WE DO NOT, THEREFORE, FORESEE PROBLEM OF GETTING GOJ TO GIVE REASONABLY FIRM ASSURANCES OF MAINTAINING THE TWO STATIONS THROUGH 1977, PARTICULARLY IF WE CAN BE FORTHCOMING IN FACILITATING A SMOOTH TAKE-OVER BY MSA PERSONNEL. MAIN QUESTION HERE IS WHETHER OR NOT WASHINGTON AGENCIES CAN AGREE IN TIME FOR MSA TO TAKE OVER ON APRIL 1, 1975. WE MAY HAVE ALREADY PASSED POINT AT WHICH WE WILL HAVE TO DROP BACK TO JULY 1, 1975, AS TARGET IN ORDER FOR MSA BOTH TO SECURE FUNDING AND COMPLETE NECESSARY CONSTRUCTION OF NEW LORAN A BUILDINGS.
SHOESMITH

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