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ACTION EUR-00

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O 201220Z NOV 89
FM AMEMBASSY PRAGUE
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 1758
USIA WASHDC IMMEDIATE 7727
INFO EASTERN EUROPEAN POSTS IMMEDIATE

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USIA FOR EU (PENDERGRAST AND JORIA)
STATE FOR EUR/EY, PA AND HA
DEPARTMENT PASS TO ERICA SCHLAGER - CSCE COMMISSION

E.O. 12356: N/A
TAGS: CASC, PHUM, PREL, CZ
SUBJECT: EMBASSY PROTEST OF ATTACK ON AMERICAN JOURNALISTS DURING NOVEMBER 17-19 DEMONSTRATIONS IN PRAGUE

REF: PRAGUE 8082

1. AS INDICATED IN REFTEL, AND IN CONJUNCTION WITH A DEMARCHE BY THE AMBASSADOR CONCERNING THE BRUTAL RESPONSE BY CZECHOSLOVAK POLICE TO DEMONSTRATIONS WHICH OCCURRED IN PRAGUE ON NOVEMBER 17, AND THEREAFTER, EMBASSY IS SUBMITTING A NOTE OF PROTEST CONCERNING SEVEN AMERICAN CITIZEN JOURNALISTS WHO WERE ATTACKED BY SECURITY OFFICIALS DURING THE DEMONSTRATIONS. THE TEXT OF THE NOTE FOLLOWS BELOW IN PARA 3.

2. THE MINISTRY HAS TWICE INFORMED THE EMBASSY THAT IT CANNOT ENSURE THE SECURITY OF FOREIGNERS, NEITHER DIPLOMATS, JOURNALISTS NOR CASUAL OBSERVERS WHO UNCLASSIFIED

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ARE "PRESENT WITHIN THE RANGE OF UNPERMITTED DEMONSTRATIONS". AN ORAL WARNING WAS PRESENTED TO

3. THE TEXT OF NOTE FOLLOWS:


MS. PAULA BUTTURINI OF THE CHICAGO TRIBUNE WAS SEVERELY BEATEN BY UNIFORMED POLICE, UNDER THE DIRECTION OF A PLAINCLOTHES OFFICIAL. SHE REQUIRED EMERGENCY MEDICAL ATTENTION AT THE FRANCISCU CLINIC FOR HEAD WOUNDS, AND RECEIVED 16 STITCHES. WITH HER WAS MR. TYLER MARSHALL, OF THE LOS ANGELES TIMES, WHO WAS ALSO BEATEN AND UNCLASSIFIED

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TREATED AT THE FRANCISCU CLINIC.

MR. PAUL CONOVER OF CABLE NEWS NETWORK WAS ACCOSTED BY THREE PLAINCLOTHES OFFICIALS. HE WAS SHOVED AND STRUCK REPEATEDLY WITH NIGHTSTICKS. THE OFFICIALS DEMANDED THAT HE SURRENDER HIS VIDEO TAPE, WHICH HE DID. THEY THEN SEIZED HIS CAMERA WHICH WAS CARRIED OFF BY UNIFORMED PERSONNEL. THE EMBASSY STRONGLY URGES THE IMMEDIATE RETURN OF THE SONA BETA CAMCORDER, VALUED AT THIRTY THOUSAND DOLLARS (DOLS 30,000), TO THE REPRESENTATIVES OF THE CABLE NEWS NETWORK. IN ADDITION MR. CONOVER'S SOVIET PRESS CREDENTIALS WERE DESTROYED.

MR. JOHN KAUFMAN, OF THE BOSTON GLOBE, WAS SIMILARLY
ACCOSTED, BOTH BEATEN AND MACE BY SECURITY OFFICIALS.

MR. ANDREW ALEXANDER AND MR. MICHAEL SCHWARZ
OF COX NEWSPAPERS WERE ALSO ATTACKED. MR. SCHWARZ' PHOTOGRAPHIC EQUIPMENT WAS SMASHED.
MR. TIM ORTMAN OF THE NATIONAL BROADCASTING COMPANY (NBC) WAS BEATEN WITH NIGHTSTICKS AND SUFFERED A CONCUSSION AND LEG INJURIES AND WAS TAKEN TO WEST GERMANY FOR MEDICAL TREATMENT. HIS CAMERA-EQUIPMENT WAS DESTROYED.

THE ABOVE INCIDENTS ALL INVOLVED AMERICAN CITIZENS.
THE EMBASSY IS AWARE OF NUMEROUS OTHER INCIDENTS INVOLVING ACCREDITED JOURNALISTS OF BOTH CZECHOSLOVAK AND FOREIGN NATIONALITIES WHO WERE BRUTALLY TREATED DURING THE PERFORMANCE OF THEIR DUTIES. WITH REFERENCE TO THE MINISTRY'S NOTE NO. 317.572/89 CONCERNING THE

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MINISTRY'S INABILITY TO ENSURE THE SECURITY OF JOURNALISTS WITHIN THE RANGE OF UNPERMITTED DEMONSTRATIONS, THE EMBASSY MUST EMPHASIZE THAT ALL ATTACKS WERE MADE BY CZECHOSLOVAK POLICE OFFICIALS. IN ALL CASES THE JOURNALISTS IDENTIFIED THEMSELVES CLEARLY AND WERE SUBSEQUENTLY BEATEN. IN PARTICULAR CAMERAMEN AND THEIR EQUIPMENT APPEAR TO HAVE BEEN SINGLED OUT FOR ATTACK.

IN KEEPING WITH THE AGREEMENTS OF THE CONFERENCE ON SECURITY AND COOPERATION IN EUROPE, AS WELL AS INTERNATIONALLY ACCEPTED STANDARDS OF HUMAN RIGHTS, THE EMBASSY WISHES TO CONVEY ITS STRONGEST PROTEST AGAINST SUCH DELIBERATE INTERFERENCE WITH THE LEGITIMATE CONDUCT OF INFORMATION MEDIA ACTIVITIES AND PHYSICAL ABUSE OF PERSONS ENGAGED IN NORMAL PRESS UNCLASSIFIED

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BUSINESS.

THE EMBASSY WOULD APPRECIATE RECEIVING THE MINISTRY'S EARLIEST REPLY. COMPLIMENTARY CLOSE, END TEXT. BLACK