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FRENCH FOREIGN MINISTER'S REMARKS ON CHINESE/ALGERIAN NUCLEAR COOPERATION

THE FRENCH FOREIGN MINISTRY HAS PROVIDED THE EMBASSY WITH A FULL FRENCH TEXT OF FRENCH FOREIGN MINISTER DUMAS' COMMENTS TO THE PRESS IN BEIJING ON MAY 1. THERE FOLLOWS AN EMBASSY TRANSLATION OF THE SECTIONS RELATING TO CHINESE/ALGERIAN NUCLEAR COOPERATION.

QUOTE: ... YOU SAW THAT THE PRESS REPORTED ON CHINA'S ENGAGEMENT IN NUCLEAR COOPERATION WITH ALGERIA. I TOOK THE OPPORTUNITY TO QUESTION MY INTERLOCUTORS ON THIS SUBJECT. THE CHINESE CONFIRMED THAT CHINA WAS ENGAGED IN NUCLEAR COOPERATION WITH PAKISTAN AND ALGERIA, WHICH HAS NOTHING TO DO WITH COOPERATION ENGAGED WITH NORTH KOREA. CONCERNED ABOUT COOPERATION WITH ALGERIA, I RECEIVED FROM THE THE PRIME MINISTER AND THE MINISTER FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS, CERTAIN DETAILS EXPLAINING THAT EVEN IF CHINA WAS NOT ADHERING TO THE NON-PROLIFERATION TREATY, IT VERY STRICTLY COMPLIED WITH THE CONTROL REQUIREMENTS OF THE INTERNATIONAL ATOMIC ENERGY AGENCY.

THE INFORMATION THAT WAS GIVEN TO ME YESTERDAY BY THE PRIME MINISTER AT MY REQUEST CONFIRMS THAT, UPON REQUEST FROM THE CHINESE PARTY, THE ALGERIANS ACCEPTED COMPLIANCE WITH THE SAME CONTROLS. I WAS INFORMED THAT THIS WAS AN OPERATION CONCERNING A SMALL-SCALE CIVILIAN RESEARCH CENTER, AND THAT THERE WAS NO QUESTION OF SUPPLYING TECHNICAL MEANS ENABLING ALGERIA TO OBTAIN ATOMIC WEAPONS. FINALLY, THE LAST INFORMATION WAS THAT ALGERIA ACCEPTED MAKING PUBLIC ALL USEFUL INFORMATION CONCERNING SUCH COOPERATION, IN AGREEMENT WITH THE CHINESE.

... I DO NOT THINK THAT THERE IS, ON THE PART OF CHINA, ANY SYSTEMATIC DESIRE TO HIDE OPERATIONS WITH ALGERIA SINCE CHINA ASSERTS --WHICH IS TO BE VERIFIED-- THAT IT IS COMPLYING WITH THE REQUIREMENTS OF THE NON-PROLIFERATION TREATY AND THAT IT PROVIDED IAEA WITH ALL THE NECESSARY INFORMATION. THAT BEING SAID, IT IS ANOTHER MATTER TO MAKE PUBLIC THE ACTIVITIES OF THIS OR THAT COUNTRY IN THIS AREA. HOWEVER, THERE ARE, IN OTHER PARTS OF THE WORLD, EXAMPLES OF ATTITUDES OF THIS TYPE: I AM THINKING OF A PARTICULARLY SENSITIVE REGION, THAT OF THE MIDDLE EAST. EVERY COUNTRY DOES AS IT DEEMS APPROPRIATE, AND THIS IS NOT ALWAYS IN COMPLIANCE WITH TRANSPARENCY RULES.

THE OPPORTUNITY WAS GIVEN TO ME, WHICH I DO HERE AS WELL AS ELSEWHERE, TO EXPLAIN THAT, IN THE AREA OF WEAPONS FOR MASSIVE DESTRUCTION, SUCH AS NUCLEAR ARMAMENT, TRANSPARENCY SHOULD BE THE RULE.

IN EVERY PLACE WHERE WE TALK ABOUT THESE SUBJECTS, WHETHER IT BE

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CONCERNING THE GULF CRISIS, OR IN THE UNITED NATIONS, OR IN THE RELATIONSHIPS WITH OUR PARTNERS OR WITHIN EUROPE, FRANCE ALWAYS DEFENDS TRANSPARENCY, CONTROL AND NON-PROLIFERATION.

QUESTION: I WOULD LIKE TO KNOW IF YOU KNOW THE DATE WHEN THIS CONTRACT WAS SIGNED WITH CHINA, AS WELL AS WHERE IT STANDS, IF YOU THINK THAT, IN VIEW OF YOUR PRIVILEGED TIES WITH ALGERIA, INFORMATION ON THIS CONTRACT WOULD HAVE BEEN DESIRABLE?

THE MINISTER: IN TWENTY-FOUR HOURS OF DISCUSSIONS WITH THE CHINESE AUTHORITIES, IT WAS NOT POSSIBLE FOR ME TO GO INTO THINGS IN DETAIL. THE FACT THAT THE TWO PARTIES CONCERNED MADE THE COMMITMENT TO MAKE PUBLIC THE PROVISIONS OF THIS AGREEMENT LEADS ME TO BELIEVE THAT WE WILL KNOW MORE SOON. IN ANY CASE, FRANCE WILL WATCH THIS OPERATION CLOSELY. HOWEVER, ALGERIA AND CHINA ARE TWO SOVEREIGN STATES. WE FORTUNATELY NO LONGER HAVE HAD, AND THIS FOR A LONG TIME, TO SUPERVISE ALGERIA. IT IS IMPORTANT, IN VIEW OF THE CLOSENESS OF OUR COUNTRIES, TO KNOW WHAT THE OTHER ONE IS DOING AND VICE-VERSA. THEREFORE, THIS IS SOMETHING WE WILL CONTINUE TO KEEP AN EYE ON, IN THE SPIRIT THAT I HAVE JUST DESCRIBED, WHICH DOES NOT NECESSARILY IMMEDIATELY MEAN SUSPICION.

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