

INCOMING STATE
DEPARTMENT CABLE

SENSITIVE

RR RUEHDOI
DE RUEHUM #0053/01 0120646
ZNR UUUUU ZZH
R 120646Z JAN 99
FM AMEMBASSY ULAANBAATAR
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 1665
INFO RUEHIA/USIA WASHDC 0349
RUEHBJ/AMEMBASSY BEIJING 0979

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CLAS ULAANBAATAR 000053

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STATE FOR EAP/CM AND OES-R.CHEW
ALSO PASS INT/USGS/RESTON W.RIPPLE
INT ALSO FOR USFWS-C.HAMILTON AND M.LAVIN, LAW ENFORCEMENT
E.O. 12958: N/A
TAGS: SENV, PGOV, PINR, MG
SUBJECT: FALCON ISSUE NOTED TO ENVIRONMENT MINISTER
REF: 98 ULAANBAATAR 1672

1. (U) SUMMARY. ON JANUARY 8 POLOFF PAID A COURTESY CALL ON THE NEW MINISTER FOR ENVIRONMENT S. MENDSAIXHAN (BIO INFORMATION REFTTEL PARA 8). JUST PRIOR TO THE MEETING POST LEARNED OF AN ARTICLE TO BE PUBLISHED IN THE FEBRUARY ISSUE OF SMITHSONIAN MAGAZINE DESCRIBING AN ENDANGERED FALCON POPULATION AND MONGOLIAN GOVERNMENT INVOLVEMENT IN THE FALCON TIDE. THEREFORE, EMBOFF ALSO DISCUSSED THIS ARTICLE, ENDANGERED SPECIES, AND FALCONS IN PARTICULAR WITH THE MINISTER. END SUMMARY.
NEW MINISTER ON THE JOB

2. (U) MENDSAIXHAN OUTLINED TWO MAJOR PROJECTS FOR THE BEGINNING OF HIS TERM: 1) TO EVALUTE TIMBER RESOURCES AND DETERMINING SUSTAINABLE LEVELS OF PRODUCTION, AND 2) TO

ASSESS ANIMAL POPULATIONS AND SET LIMITS FOR THE 1999
NTING SCHEDULE. IN HIS FIRST TWO WEEKS IN OFFICE HE HAS
ESTABLISHED SEVERAL POLICIES ON FORESTS, INCLUDING
QUADRUPLING THE CUSTOMS TAX FOR EXPORTED RAW TIMBER AND
DECLARING THAT NO PINE TREES WOULD BE EXPORTED IN 1999.
MENDSAIXHAN EXPRESSED APPRECIATION FOR USG EFFORTS TO

ASSIST THE ENVIRONMENT MINISTRY IN ITS WORK, NOTING THAT DURING HER MAY VISIT TO MONGOLIA THE SECRETARY LISTED ENVIRONMENTAL COOPERATION AS A PRIORITY. HE PROMISED THAT THE MINISTRY WOULD TAKE AN ACTIVE ROLE TO FIND WAYS TO ENHANCE MONGOLIA'S NATURAL RESOURCES AND STRIKE A BALANCE BETWEEN CONSERVATION AND ECONOMIC USE OF RESOURCES. HE

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ALSO NOTED THE MINISTRY'S HOPE TO EXPAND BILATERAL AND MULTILATERAL COOPERATION, INCLUDING DIRECT CONTACTS WITH THE U.S. ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY. EVERY MINISTER'S HEADACHE

3. (SBU) EMBOFF TOLD THE MINISTER THAT THE EMBASSY LEARNED THAT AN ARTICLE ON MONGOLIAN FALCONS WOULD BE PRINTED IN THE FEBRUARY ISSUE OF SMITHSONIAN MAGAZINE. IT IS REPORTED THAT THE ARTICLE SUPPORTS RESEARCH DEMONSTRATING THAT THE FALCON POPULATION IS ENDANGERED AND MAKES ALLEGATIONS THAT

THE GOM IS INVOLVED IN SMUGGLING AND INTERNATIONAL FALCON TIDE. EMBOFF EMPHASIZED THAT, TO OUR KNOWLEDGE, THIS ARTICLE DOES NOT REPEAT NOT DEAL WITH ALAN PARROT'S BUSINESS PROPOSAL. REITERATING THE USG POSITION THAT SUPPORTS A BAN IN ALL TIDE OF ENDANGERED SPECIES, POST SUGGESTED THIS AS A POSSIBLE ROUTE FOR THE GOM. MENDSAIKHAN ACKNOWLEDGED THAT FALCONS HAVE BEEN EVERY ENVIRONMENTAL MINISTER'S HEADACHE AND HE IS NOT AN EXCEPTION. BASED ON POPULATION ESTIMATES, THE GOM HAS BEEN LICENSING LEGAL EXPORT OF FALCONS FOR THE PAST FOUR YEARS.

4. (SBU) AS FAR AS HE KNOWS, NO ONE IN THE MINISTRY OR THE GOVERNMENT HAS BEEN SMUGGLING FALCONS, BUT MENDSAIKHAN VOWED TO MAKE A DETAILED STUDY OF THE ISSUE. THE MINISTRY USES SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH TO DETERMINE FALCON POPULATIONS AND THEIR LOCATION, BUT HE ADMITTED THAT RECENT RESEARCH IS LACKING AND THE NUMBERS ARE ONLY APPROXIMATE. FOR EXTENSIVE RESEARCH THE MINISTRY WILL NEED ASSISTANCE. SECONDLY, MENDSAIKHAN NOTED THAT SPECIES CONSERVATION IS NOT JUST THE WORK OF THE MINISTRY OR THE GOVERNMENT, BUT THAT THEY MUST INCREASE PUBLIC AWARENESS OF THE SERIOUSNESS OF THE ISSUE IN ORDER TO IMPROVE PROTECTION AND RATIONAL USE OF RESOURCES.

ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY'S VIEW

5. (SBU) IN A CALL TO S. BANZRAGCH, DIRECTOR OF THE ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY, WHO IS MOST DIRECTLY

RESPONSIBLE FOR SPECIES CONSERVATION, POST ALSO DISCUSSED THE UPCOMING SMITHSONIAN MAGAZINE ARTICLE. BANZRAGCH REMEMBERS MEETING THE REPORTER LAST SUMMER, AND THAT HE SPOKE ONLY OF GOM POLICY FOR FALCON CONSERVATION. AS IN EARLIER CONVERSATIONS, BANZRAGCH REITERATED THAT THE GOVERNMENT IS NOT INVOLVED IN SMUGGLING FALCONS. THE TWO-YEAR RESEARCH PROJECT CONDUCTED WITH THE INSTITUTE IN KUWAIT IS NOW OVER. ACCORDING TO THE MINISTRY'S

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INFORMATION, NEITHER SAKER NOR WHITE FALCONS ARE ENDANGERED
IN MONGOLIA, BUT THEY ARE TREATED AS SUCH BECAUSE THEY ARE
LISTED IN CITES CATEGORY II.

COMMENT

6. (SBU) POST WILL SEND A LETTER TO THE MINISTER
OFFICIALLY OUTLINING THE USG POSITION ON SPECIES
CONSERVATION AND BANNING TIDE IN ENDANGERED SPECIES, WHILE
OFFERING TO BE OF ASSISTANCE IN THEIR ENDEAVORS. NOW THAT
MINISTERS ARE NOT MEMBERS OF PARLIAMENT, ALTHOUGH NO LESS
POLITICALLY INFLUENCED, MENDSAIKHAN MAY BE ABLE TO TAKE A
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MORE ACTIVE ROLE THAN THE FORMER MINISTER. HE SEEMED QUITE
SERIOUS AND UNDERSTOOD THE RAMIFICATIONS FOR THE GOM OF
POOR PUBLICITY, EVEN IN THE U.S. ENVIRONMENTAL COMMUNITY.

BANZRAGCH, TOO, WAS CONCERNED ABOUT THE ARTICLE'S POSSIBLE
EFFECT. ALTHOUGH ALAN PARROT HAS NOT CONTACTED POST IN
OVER A MONTH, THE GOM IS PROBABLY WORRIED ABOUT OPENING
THAT CAN OF WORMS AGAIN WITH THE ALLEGATIONS MADE IN THE
SMITHSONIAN ARTICLE.

7. (SBU) BECAUSE SEVERAL ILLEGAL SHIPMENTS OF FALCONS HAVE
BEEN INTERCEPTED BY THE GOM IN THE PAST YEAR, WE KNOW
SMUGGLING HAPPENS. RUMORS HAVE CONNECTED ENVIRONMENT
MINISTRY OFFICIALS TO BUSINESS WITH SUSPECT COMPANIES KNOWN
FOR LESS THAN LEGAL INTERNATIONAL TIDING PRACTICES,
INCLUDING FALCON TIDING. WHETHER MONGOLIAN FALCON EXPORT
SHOULD BE BANNED MAY DEPEND ON WHOSE RESEARCH ONE BELIEVES,
BUT THE VOLUME OF FALCON SMUGGLING AND THE LEVEL OF GOM
INVOLVEMENT MAY HAVE TO BE ADDRESSED BY THE MINISTRY,

SOONER OTHER THAN LATER. END COMMENT.

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