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USC 3024(i)

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SERIAL: (U)

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/***** THIS IS A COMBINED MESSAGE *****/

BODY

COUNTRY: (U) SINGAPORE (SN); MALAYSIA (MY); SOUTH AFRICA (SF).

SUBJ: MALAYSIA MINISTER OF DEFENSE

ANNOUNCES AN ATTACK HELICOPTER DECISION (U)

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WARNING: (U) THIS IS AN INFORMATION REPORT, NOT
FINALLY EVALUATED INTELLIGENCE. REPORT CLASSIFIED

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DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE

DOI: (U) 970330.

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SOURCE: (U) "THE STRAITS TIMES", SINGAPORE, 970330, (U),
IN ENGLISH. THIS PAPER IS A PRO-GOVERNMENT
NEWSPAPER WIDELY READ BOTH LOCALLY AND REGIONALLY.
SUMMARY: (C) ON 970328, MALAYSIA'S DEFENSE MINISTER DATUK
SYED HAMID ((ALBAR)) ANNOUNCED MALAYSIA PLANS TO BUY EIGHT
SOUTH AFRICAN ROOIVALK ATTACK HELICOPTERS. HE SAID THE
CONTRACT HAS YET TO BE SIGNED, BUT HOPED TO SIGN IT SOON.
TEXT: 1. (U) ACCORDING TO THE 30 MAR 97 EDITION OF
SINGAPORE'S DAILY NEWSPAPER "THE STRAITS TIMES," ON 970328
MALAYSIA'S DEFENSE MINISTER, DATUK SYED HAMIS ((ALBAR)),
ANNOUNCED MALAYSIA'S DECISION TO BUY EIGHT SOUTH AFRICAN
ATTACK HELICOPTERS FOR MALAYSIA'S ARMY AIR CORPS. THE
NEWSPAPER QUOTES THE DEFENSE MINISTER AS SAYING "THE
PURCHASE PRICE FOR THE HELICOPTER--THE FIRST TO BE SOLD
OUTSIDE SOUTH AFRICA--IS BEING NEGOTIATED AND WE HOPE TO
SIGN THE CONTRACT SOON."
2. (U) THE ARTI CLE GOES ON TO SAY THE ROOIVALK PURCHASE
WILL MAKE MALAYSIA THE FIRST COUNTRY IN THE REGION TO BUY A
DEDICATED ATTACK HELICOPTER. DATUK SYED HAMIN ALBAR SAID
THE EIGHT HELICOPTERS WOULD FORM THE CORE FOR FUTURE
EXPANSION OF THE ROOIVALK FLEET IN THE ARMED FORCES. HE SAID

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MALAYSIA WOULD BUILD UP THE FLEET GRADUALLY BECAUSE OF FINANCIAL CONSTRAINTS. HE DID NOT SPECIFY THE FINAL NUMBER OF HELICOPTERS TO BE PURCHASED, BUT THE ARTICLE STATED "THE MINISTRY IS UNDERSTOOD TO BE KEEN ON HAVING A FLEET OF ABOUT 30 CRAFT."

3. (U) THE DECISION TO PURCHASE THE ROOIVALK OVER OTHER MAKES COMES AFTER SOUTH AFRICA'S PRESIDENT NELSON ((MANDELA)) VISITED MALAYSIA IN MARCH 1997. HE WAS REPORTED TO HAVE SAID SOUTH AFRICA WAS CONSIDERING SELLING THE HELICOPTER TO MALAYSIA AND THE DEAL WAS BEING FINALIZED. IN ADDITION TO BUYING THE ROOIVALK ATTACK HELICOPTER, SPECULATION IS RIFE THAT MALAYSIA WILL BUY THE ORYXS TRANSPORT HELICOPTER TO REPLACE ITS AGEING NURI HELICOPTER FLEET WHICH HAS BEEN INVOLVED IN SE VERAL RECENT CRASHES.

4. DATUK SYED HAMID ALBAR SAID MALAYSIA'S CABINET ON WEDNESDAY, 26 MAR 97, ORDERED THE RMAF TO MAKE RECOMMENDATIONS WITHIN 30 DAYS ON THE FATE OF THE NURI HELICOPTER. THE CHOICE IS BETWEEN RETIRING THE NURI OR ENHANCING ITS CAPABILITIES TO REDUCE THE RISK OF FUTURE CRASHES.

(b)(1); (b)(3):10 USC 424; (b)(3):50 USC 3024(i); Sec. 1.4(c)

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