

Viewing cable 07BEIJING5918, CHINA TO CONSIDER FORMAL UNSC BRIEFING ON BURMA,

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 BEIJING 005918

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STATE FOR IO/UNP/PAUL WICKBERG, EAP/MLS/AARON COPE,
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SUBJECT: CHINA TO CONSIDER FORMAL UNSC BRIEFING ON BURMA,
OPPOSES "TOO MUCH" PRESSURE ON RANGOON

REF: STATE 125430

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Classified By: Political Minister Counselor Aubrey Carlson, Reasons 1.4
(b/d).

1. (C) Summary: China will consider supporting a formal briefing of the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) by Special Envoy Gambari (reftel), MFA Burma, Laos, Cambodia and Vietnam Division Deputy Director Liang Jianjun told us September 10. Liang said the MFA had conveyed to the Burmese government Gambari's request to travel twice to Burma and that the Burmese were receptive to a possible trip after September 20. China's Ambassador in Burma has conveyed to senior Burmese officials China's desire that Rangoon resolve the ongoing crisis "in the proper way." Liang described Burma's National Convention as a positive political development. In any case, Liang said, encouragement and engagement, not pressure and sanctions, are the best way to move Burma toward political and economic reform. End Summary.

China to Consider Supporting Formal Gambari Meeting

[2. (C) As instructed (reftel), we delivered points urging China to support early travel by Special Envoy Gambari to Burma and a formal briefing of the UNSC by Gambari after his trip to MFA Department of Asian Affairs, Burma, Cambodia, Laos and Vietnam Division Deputy Director Liang Jianjun on September 10. Liang said that China will consider U.S. views but offered no specific substantive response. Liang said in general that China and the United States have similar views on the role of the UN Secretary-General and Gambari, whom Liang said enjoys "good contact and coordination" with Burmese officials.

Gambari's Trip Requests Conveyed -----

[3. (C) Liang said that the Chinese Embassy in Rangoon had conveyed to the Burmese government Gambari's request to travel twice to Burma: once before his September 20 informal UNSC briefing and once after. Liang reported that Burmese officials are receptive to Gambari visiting Burma after September 20, but the Burmese Foreign Minister's schedule may preclude a Gambari visit before that date.

China Weighs in -----

[4. (C) Liang said that in response to the ongoing turmoil in Burma, the Chinese Ambassador in Rangoon recently expressed to senior Burmese officials China's view that the Burmese government needs to solve the ongoing crisis "in the proper way." Liang said that the Burmese public had been unprepared for the recent precipitous rise in fuel prices, and the current crises reflects "a lack of good governance skills" within the Burmese government. Liang had heard that the hike in fuel prices (still lower than China's) actually stemmed from IMF advice to reduce subsidies. But whatever the original impetus, Liang said, the Burmese government's haphazard actions showed that Burma needs social and political, as well as economic, reform.

Plug for National Convention -----

[5. (C) Liang cast Burma's National Convention, concluded on September 3, in a positive light. While not perfect, the National Convention showed Burma has political will to move ahead on reforms. He said that the international community must encourage the Burmese government to continue on its "roadmap to democracy." Liang did not respond to our observation that the USG regards the National Convention process as a sham, because it does not include all sectors of Burmese society, particularly the democratic opposition.

Encouragement Not Sanctions -----

[6. (C) Liang emphasized that China is urging the Burmese

government to undertake a true reconciliation process. However, he said that too much pressure would be counter-productive. He reiterated the Chinese position that sanctions are not effective and are "unfair to normal people." He conceded that the military regime has the "power to solve" the issue of Aung San Suu Kyi, though he added that the democracy leader should not be considered the critical

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element in the process of national conciliation. Within the context of China's policy of non-interference, China will continue to encourage Burma to develop a "socially harmonious" society, Liang said.

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