MEMO: SOUTH AFRICAN RUGBY TOUR OF THE UNITED STATES

As the current schedule stands, the Springboks (South Africa's national rugby team) will be competing with non-professional U.S. teams at three locations in the U.S.:

(1) September 19, Chicago - exact location unknown.
(2) September 22, Albany - Bleaker Stadium, with an Eastern Rugby Football Union team.
(3) September 26, New York City - Randall's Island Stadium, with the 'American Eagles' team of the ERFU.

The South Africans were invited by the ERFU, which falls under the nationwide American Rugby Football Union (ARFU). That the South Africans are seeking to compete in a country in which rugby is an insignificant sport is an indication of the effectiveness of the international boycott and of the extent of South Africa's campaign to re-establish links in the international sports arena. According to State Department, the South Africans first asked the ARFU if it could extend the invitation and they (the Springboks) would foot the entire bill. But before the ARFU made a decision, the ERFU took the initiative and extended the invitation.

According to the president of the ARFU, Richard Moneymaker, and the president of the ERFU, Bill Haffner, the tour is being funded by the Springboks themselves, "local funding," and the money earned by gate fees, etc. But a letter leaked by someone from Citibank revealed that the ERFU approached the bank asking for financial support for the tour, with the option of being either a recognized or anonymous sponsor. (The letter also said that "your company will benefit from this support in the South African community.") It was also learned that the union approached a large number of other U.S. corporations for funding for the tour.

In early July, a representative of the PAC met with the black caucus of the N.Y. State Legislature, which agreed to table a resolution on the house floor banning the Springboks from competing in N.Y. At this time a demonstration in protest of the tour and in support of legislative action was held in Albany, and we have a limited list of contacts in the Albany area. A debate on the issue in the Legislature might be held in abeyance for a while, but observers are somewhat optimistic.
The latest news is that State Department announced publicly today that it will grant visas to the Springboks, and gave the usual reasons ("it is not U.S. policy to interfere with private sports contacts; does not constitute an endorsement of the visit; etc."). They said all the players were individually screened and found "eligible". Interestingly, the Prime Minister of New Zealand had suggested earlier that N.Z. would not issue visas unless the Springboks had already obtained American visas. The Springboks will also pass through the U.S. later this month on their way to New Zealand, and it is suspected that they will meet with rugby officials here.

The total Springbok contingent is 34 people, 30 of whom are team members and four are officials. Four of them are also members of the South African Defence Force, and two of the police. Although State Department claimed the team is "multiracial", there is only one player of mixed race and one official. The rest are white.

ACOA sent messages to President Reagan and to C. Crocker at the State Dept. ACCESS has done the same, and as a coalition member of ACCESS, ACOA will participate in the coalition's actions to try and halt the tour. Later on this week a meeting will be held in N.Y.C. to discuss some type of a protest/campaign strategy and coordination. ACCESS has also issued a press release (this morning).

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URGE YOU TO ANNOUNCE REFUSAL ENTRY VISAS TO SOUTH AFRICAN RUGBY TEAM PLANNING US TRIP FOLLOWING NEW ZEALAND TOUR ALLOWING US GAMES WOULD SIGNAL INDIFFERENCE TO APARTHEID AND TO DOMESTIC AND INTERNATIONAL PUBLIC OPINION.

WILLIAM BOOTH
PRESIDENT
AMERICAN COMMITTEE ON AFRICA

COPY OF MESSAGE SENT TO C. CROCKER, STATE DEPT.