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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 QUEBEC 000080

SIPDIS

MONTREAL FOR DHS - KUPSCHE

WHA/CAN FOR BREESE

E.O. 12958: DECL: 5/17/2009

TAGS: ASEC, PREL, PGOV, PHUM, CA

SUBJECT: KANESATAKE CALM BUT CONFRONTATION CONTINUES

REF: MONTREAL 68

CLASSIFIED BY: susan keogh, consul general, Quebec, State.

REASON: 1.5 (B)

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1. Confidential - Entire text.

2. (C) Summary: The situation within the Mohawk settlement of Kanesatake, a territory (not a reserve) bordering the U.S.,

remains tense and complicated but some progress has been made in keeping the peace in the past week. Quebec's provincial police force (SQ) has taken the lead in mounting day and night patrols in Kanesatake without incident in close coordination with the RCMP. Grand Chief James Gabriel, burned out of his house in January by a mob, remains in a hotel in the Montreal area. Quebec's Ministry of Public Security told DCM Kelly and CG Keogh that the tripartite strategy is to avoid counterreaction by the heavily armed "warriors" and to deal with criminal elements through the court system. The Quebec authorities have asked for greater coordination with the FBI on the situation.

End Summary

3. (C) In a meeting with Deputy Minister Luc Crepault and Director General Georges Beauchemin May 14, the two told DCM Kelly and Quebec Consul General Keogh that the situation in the Kanesatake territory bordering the U.S. is calm but fragile.

"Warriors" among the 1,400 inhabitants continue to pose major security headaches for the Quebec Ministry of Public Security, however, with a very aggressive, confrontational approach, although some progress has been made in the last week.

4. (C) At the request of the aboriginal authorities, Quebec's police force (SQ) has been conducting regular day and night patrols in the territory for the past week, apparently

well-received and breaking several weeks of no-man's land lawlessness. There is solid cooperation with the RCMP including daily telephone calls. While the 7-week-old tripartite policing agreement between the SQ, RCMP and Grand Chief James Gabriel's Band Council is now being implemented, Gabriel remains in a hotel near Montreal ("living high at government expense") with a troop of several dozen Mohawk warriors, unable to return to Kanesatake. An election to see if Gabriel can continue as Grand Chief is planned for July 7. Meanwhile, Mohawks from other reserves continue to arrive in Kanesatake, including some from Colorado, to join in the resistance.

5. (C) Apart from the patrolling, Beauchemin said any police operations would be interpreted as an "invasion." The Quebec Government wants to avoid a 1996 Oka-type situation where a mechanized brigade had to intervene and there were costly social and political reactions. "Anything we do to squash a fly will give rise to huge problems." The strategy is to avoid counterreaction and "psychodrama" by keeping a low profile.

6. (C) The Charest Government has refused a \$1.5 million request by Police Chief Ed Thompson to increase the native police force to 38 people. Thompson and his peacekeepers have never been able to patrol and had to retire after being pelted

with rocks and sticks, with minor injuries. Having funded the first group of warriors/police that Gabriel hired earlier this year, who were virtually taken hostage inside Kanesatake, we understand Ottawa is also hesitating to provide more police forces.

7. (C) The role of Quebec security forces is prominent because Kanesatake is not a reserve but a settlement ("etablissement"). The patchwork of land belongs to the federal government but it does not have the status of reserve territory. Federal law applies to governance but the province can enter into agreements with the Band Councils. The Quebec police (SQ) are more accepted than the RCMP. With long memories, the Mohawks remember that the RCMP killed one of theirs in 1916. Beauchemin described the situation as akin to a family quarrel with people held hostage: the two embattled factions have been warring for 200 years, he added. A 5-year old law to consolidate the area in a new juridical arrangement has not been implemented. This ambiguity has contributed to the current anarchic, destabilized situation at Kanesatake. It started as a governance problem with related Band Council members refusing to talk to each other, but degenerated into a law-and-order problem with a lot of firepower involved. Beauchemin spoke of rocket launchers, among other weaponry, in the hands of the warriors, seen in the newspapers in military fatigues and with faces covered.

Beauchemin noted that these weapons were easy to acquire: he had spent 15 minutes on line and was able to purchase a whole range of weapons: "You can get anything on the Internet from the United States," he said. In his view, the Mohawks were prepared to use them.

8. (C) The Quebec side acknowledged that a breakdown of law and order of the magnitude that has happened at Kanasatake would be intolerable outside of an aboriginal area. Trying to avoid a costly confrontation, yet dealing with scofflaws, they have launched three criminal investigations, infiltrating the highly criminalized elements and using the courts to prosecute offenders. One investigation involves those charged with offenses during the riot of January 12; another involves the burning of Chief Gabriel's house; a third involves a mixed squad of police in a longer-term investigation of organized crime. Asked about U.S. role, the Public Security Ministry officials requested (as Minister Chagnon has asked us in the past) better coordination with the FBI in a situation where U.S. interests are involved and the SQ is taking a lead role on the ground. Some "gun slingers" have already arrived from the U.S., and more could come. Beauchemin said in this case, the situation could evolve negatively, although he thought this to be unlikely.

KEOGH-FISHER

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