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DEPARTMENT OF STATE

Memorandum of Conversation

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DATE: January 18, 1971

SUBJECT: Canadian Representation Concerning Nevada Nuclear Test Venting

PARTICIPANTS: Mr. George S. Springsteen, Deputy Assistant Secretary, Bureau of European Affairs

Mr. Kenneth B. Williamson, Minister, Canadian Embassy

Mr. Arthur Kroeger, Counselor, Canadian Embassy

Mr. Holsey G. Handyside, Office of Atomic Energy and Aerospace, Bureau of Politico-Military Affairs

Mr. Frederick S. Quin, Office of Canadian Affairs

COPIES TO : AEC  
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Mr. Williamson said that he was calling on Mr. Springsteen at the request of the Department of External Affairs to discuss the December 18 underground nuclear test in Nevada. He referred to Mr. Kendrick's (PM/AE) telephone call to Mr. Kroeger of December 22 indicating that radiation from the test had escaped into the atmosphere. The Canadian Department of National Health and Welfare has now conducted air monitoring and has detected a slight increase in radioactivity in Canada. The readings do not indicate conclusively that the increase was a result of venting from the Nevada tests. However, Canadian authorities consider it probable because the radioactivity resulted from "fresh venting". Mr. Williamson said that he understood that the Atomic Energy Commission had been regularly conducting monitoring and that the results would be made known to the Canadian Government.

Mr. Springsteen said that the AEC was conducting an investigation of the event and that the results would be reported to the Canadian Government. All possible precautions were taken

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and safety measures followed closely during the test. Mr. Springsteen said that we had kept the Canadian Government informed and would continue to do so. The venting should be regarded as strictly accidental and on a small scale. The United States Government believes that its obligations under the Limited Test Ban Treaty have been met.

Mr. Williamson affirmed that the Canadian Government had no intention to make a formal protest or to conceive of the event as a violation of the Limited Test Ban Treaty. He indicated that the Canadian Government wished merely to express its continuing serious concern over the dangers of nuclear testing. The Canadian Department of National Health and Welfare has not made public the results of its monitoring, but it is under considerable pressure and may eventually have to make its figures public.

Mr. Springsteen asked where the monitoring had taken place. Mr. Williamson replied the sampling had been done at Windsor and Toronto. He said that the Canadian Government will not comment on the event unless questioned. He said that the United States Government would be informed of the technical details of the Canadian monitoring through normal liaison channels from the Department of National Health and Welfare to the United States Public Health Service. Mr. Williamson said that figures obtained by the Canadians were .5 to .7 pico-Curies compared to normal readings of .1 to .3. Data were collected December 25-26, 1970.

Mr. Springsteen asked if the Canadian Government had received any questions in Parliament concerning the tests. Mr. Williamson replied that the subject had not yet arisen but pointed out that if the H&W staff does release the figures, the reports may well stimulate Parliamentary questions. Should such questions be put to the Government, the Government plans to reiterate its standing opposition to all nuclear testing whatever the sponsor and note that it has raised the matter with the USG. At this point, Mr. Williamson referred explicitly to the Canadian opposition to testing at Amchitka.

Mr. Springsteen assured Mr. Williamson that the results of the AEC investigation would be conveyed to the Canadians through normal channels.