

7/24/63

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DEPARTMENT OF STATE

Memorandum of ConversationDATE: July 23, 1963
4:30 p.m.SUBJECT: McCloy's Near East Arms Limitation Probe; Security Guarantee
for Israel

PARTICIPANTS: The President
U - Mr. Ball
Mr. John J. McCloy
Assistant Secretary Phillips Talbot (NEA)
Ambassador John Badeau, American Ambassador to the UAR

COPIES TO:
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Mr. John McCone, Director, CIA
Mr. Paul Nitze, Assistant Secretary, ISA/DOD
Mr. McGeorge Bundy, The White House
Mr. Robert Komer, The White House
Mr. Hermann F. Eilts (NEA)

Reference: The Secretary's Memorandum to the President dated July 22, 1963

The President thought it best not to take any special action with respect to Israel right now. For the moment, the dialogue could be continued between the Ambassador and Eshkol. The Israelis will attempt to bargain for a security guarantee. In any case, Mr. McCone says they have not been doing very much on nuclear activity recently. Mr. Ball pointed out the successful conclusion of a test ban agreement should provide an opportunity to test Israeli intentions.

The President asked if some kind of inspection, perhaps international, could be gotten from Nasser. Mr. McCloy recalled Nasser's statement of a "collective" setting. Nasser had not thought it through, and neither a UN nor an IAEA idea had appealed to him. Nasser had pointed out the Israelis have a nuclear potential, while he does not. He would be glad to know what they are doing, but he himself had nothing to inspect. He had been particularly sensitive on missiles and refused to accept any verification. His reasons had been political. He was not seeking a security guarantee, and did not wish any "umbrella" from the Western powers. He accepted the President's good intentions, but wished to avoid any suggestion of a "protectorate". He would be willing to reply to a Presidential letter on nuclear weapons and not attacking Israel.

Ambassador Badeau

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Ambassador Badeau pointed out that when he had reviewed the subject at his last meeting with Nasser, Nasser had again mentioned the "collective" setting and had cited the Addis Ababa conference. Badeau had told Nasser he might have something more specific to suggest on his return. The Ambassador then noted that Nasser's July 22 speech had stated the UAR (1) has no plan for liquidating Israel; (2) would not attack Israel. He thought this significant.

The President suggested that an effort be made to give Nasser's statement wider dissemination in the Congress and elsewhere. He expressed an interest in seeing Nasser's remarks.

The President then noted that some inspection is needed in both Israel and the UAR. If we can get some sort of UAR inspection, we would have to give less to Israel. He asked Mr. McCone whether the UAR would accept some inspection? The President also recalled that when Couve de Murville was here, the French had expressed some concern about Israeli nuclear intentions. He asked if anything further had been heard about this?

Mr. McCone noted that the UAR had been given a small reactor by the Soviets. The UAR had not agreed to IAEA inspections. So far as Israel is concerned, we want bilateral inspection. The original French-Israeli agreement had given the French some safeguards at Dimona. The plutonium produced was to be retained by the French. Recently, Charles Lucet had expressed concern about Israeli intentions. He had noted that the Israelis are buying fuel without safeguards, requiring the French to do some preemptive buying. Mr. McCone said he is now satisfied there is no other nuclear complex in Israel at the present time. He thought we might be able to get some inspection from the UAR. In response to the President's inquiry, Mr. McCone explained that about one year after Dimona goes critical, Israel will be able to make a nuclear device. Thereafter, they can build up to two or three per year. Our estimate is that Dimona will go critical late in 1963 or early 1964. Inspection must be begun well in advance. Once the reactor is critical, much of it will be radioactive and closed off.

Mr. McCloy suggested that we use the Moscow agreement and relate any efforts in Israel to it rather than to Arab-Israeli issues.

The President

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The President thought we should get the Egyptians to agree to IAEA inspection and the Israelis to bilateral inspection. He wondered what we might have to give the Israelis to get it? Mr. Talbot pointed out that Israel has already agreed in principle to some form of inspection. Thus far, however, procedural and timing arrangements have been inadequate. The President said we should keep up the correspondence with Israel about this. Perhaps Senator Fullbright might also be gotten to make a statement on the subject. While Israel might sign some agreement on the subject, he wondered how one could prevent Israel from manufacturing nuclear weapons. Mr. McCone pointed out that the first inspection should reveal much about Israeli intentions. If, for example, the reactor includes a chemical separation plant, this suggests they may have in mind making nuclear weapons.

The President referred to Nasser's statement that he would engage in "protective" war against Israel if he discovered that Dimona is manufacturing nuclear weapons. He asked why Nasser had not stated this publicly earlier? Ambassador Badeau said our past assurances to the Arabs that the reactor is not producing such weapons have helped. An adequate inspection process is part of the whole Middle East situation.

Mr. Ball asked whether Israel would merely be able to set off a nuclear explosion or would it be a weapon? Mr. McCone pointed out that the Israelis already have the capability to mate a nuclear explosion with a weapons system. Mr. Nitze said the Pentagon believes the UAR cannot mount a successful attack against Israel. If Nasser really had to fight Israel, he would probably look at the situation once again. Ambassador Badeau thought Nasser would simply mount an air raid to wipe out Dimona and thereafter wait for UN intervention to stabilize the situation.

The President said we should not do anything for the time being. Eventually, however, an effort should be made to get an agreement from Israel, as well as some sort of international inspection in the UAR. Ambassador Badeau suggested that some thinking be done on what might be involved in a "collective" arrangement. He thought we should not merely rely on the Egyptians to come up with some ideas.

The President asked how many countries with reactors have rejected inspection? He wondered if we might work out an inspection system with those countries where the reactor is not a great problem.

Mr. McGloy

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Mr. McCloy suggested that any inquiry in Israel be held off until we know where we stand with respect to a security guarantee for Israel. If we get a letter from Nasser and then give a security guarantee to Israel, this could be a problem.

The President said that a letter from Nasser might be useful in the U.S. at this time. Ambassador Badeau thought we might pick up the appropriate quotations from Nasser's July 22 speech and also say something about nuclear inspection.

The President said that after a test ban treaty is signed, we should attempt to get every country that has not yet agreed to inspection to accept some form of international inspection. We might point out that it is in the Arab interest to do so since this will also put pressure on the Israelis. Ambassador Badeau agreed, but cautioned that care be taken to avoid any suggestion that the UAR is being singled out.

Mr. Komer recalled that we have not yet replied to Ben-Gurion's letter of two and a half months ago. The President thought his May 8 statement should be helpful to them in their security problems. Mr. Komer pointed out that Ben-Gurion's letter had specifically indicated they wished a security guarantee and that Eshkol's recent letter had referred to this request. Mr. Talbot thought a letter should be sent to Eshkol, but the nuclear and security guarantee questions should be kept separate. Mr. Ball said a proposed letter on the security guarantee question had seemed to him to be too argumentative.

The President thought we should wait on the security guarantee question. We should point out to the Israelis that the May 8 statement is as far as the President can go without inviting the Soviets into the Middle East. We should also point out all the reasons why this is the best means of doing it.

Mr. Ball reiterated that if Israel is among the first to adhere to a test ban agreement, this will be evidence of positive intentions. If they hold back, this creates a new situation which we shall have to look at.

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The President thought that signing was not sufficient. We must also have inspection. Mr. McGone pointed out that inspection applies only to reactors. It does not prevent the importation of nuclear materials.

The President asked if the Secretary could write to the French and inquire about inspection arrangements with respect to Dimona? Mr. Ball said he thought this could be done.

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