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DEPARTMENT OF STATE

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## BRIEFING MEMORANDUM

S/S <sup>10/26</sup>

October 26, 1979

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*-ACTING*

TO: The Secretary

FROM: S/AS - Gerard Smith *DG for CS*

SUBJECT: Congressional Briefing on South Atlantic Incident

This afternoon I briefed Congressmen Zablocki, Bingham, Broomfield, and Solarz on the South Atlantic nuclear incident. I described the nature of our evidence, stressing that so far we had been unable to confirm from other sources that the satellite signal detected was caused by a nuclear explosion. I indicated that we have been collecting and analyzing information since the event occurred, and that our assessment was now in its final phase.

Zablocki said that he was aware that the intelligence committees had been briefed and that he was disappointed that members of his committee had not been. I explained that the satellite data was raw intelligence, and that we believed that the search for corroborating evidence and analysis was necessary before consultations with substantive committees. Bingham asked specifically who it was that decided which committees would be briefed and which would not. I replied that it was a White House decision.

There was a great deal of speculation over who was responsible, if there was a nuclear explosion, and concern that perhaps Israel might be singled out as well as South Africa. Since I had tried to make clear that even if we determine there was a nuclear explosion we had no evidence that South Africa was responsible, I suggested that we had an equal amount of evidence that Israel was responsible, i.e., none.

In response to questions about our monitoring capability and the implications for SALT verification, I said that since we did not concentrate our collection

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capability on the southern hemisphere it was notable that we were still capable of detecting a signal indicating as low a yield as apparently was involved in this incident.

Solarz repeatedly advocated that the committee hold hearings, but Zablocki was reluctant. My guess would be that they will decide in their meeting on Tuesday to hold a closed hearing some time later in the week.

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