

UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT

Memorandum

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By NIN/369/65
241061, NARA, Date 4/20/2012

TO : NEA/NE - Mr. Strong

DATE: March 15, 1963

FROM : NEA/NE - William R. Crawford, Jr.

STATE DEPT. DECLASSIFICATION REVIEW

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SUBJECT: Israel's Atomic Energy Programs

EO 12958, 25X
IPR/CR/IR by T. Bunker Date 4/28/00

1. In Tel Aviv, I had a long talk with our Science Attaché, Dr. Webber, in Spencer Barnes' presence. Webber strikes me as a very fine addition to our staff who will be a great help in months to come.

Israel, it seems, has definitely reached a decision to proceed with establishment of one power reactor of 125 megawatt capacity. The cost of this would be upward of \$50 million. There are two broad types of reactor they might use:

The first is a General Electric natural water and enriched uranium reactor. Apparently there have already been talks between the Israelis and GE on this. Such a reactor would be subject to controls, including inspection, either by the United States or IAEA. For at least a few years to come the Israelis could probably not get the fuel elements for this type of reactor elsewhere.

The second is a natural uranium and heavy water reactor. This reactor, including the fuel elements, could be made available by several different countries, some of which would certainly require safeguards similar to those required by the US; other countries, however, might not require such controls.

The GE model is cheaper than the other type.

According to Webber, there are already two competing scientific schools of thought in Israel on this decision; the more nationalistically minded are stressing Israel's need to be "independent from any other nation" and its "national dignity" in pushing for the reactor which would be independent of US fuel elements control.

Webber favors strong US efforts at an appropriate time to make sure the Israelis purchase the US model. He thinks they will be making up their minds as to type about the end of 1963 and that they will want USG financial help. If so, and if we were in fact prepared to help financially, then buying a US reactor would constitute

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a boost

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a boost for US industry and would make absolutely certain the application of appropriate safeguards controls.

Clearly, we want Israel's atomic energy programs to be subject to controls, either US or preferably IAEA, but the issue is more complicated than that. Could we ever persuade the Arabs that the Israeli decision was inevitable and that our financial help was designed to ensure control?

2. Webber's conversations since arrival have left him with a feeling that the Israelis embarked on Dimona as a reaction to Suez, after which they felt isolated from the United States and distrustful.

3. Webber confirmed my impression that the Israelis may be pursuing independent but parallel paths of nuclear and missile development, but he doubts that these could be merged into nuclear war-headed missiles in less than a decade unless a crash program were undertaken. We can detect such a crash program through watching the activities of the Israeli scientists who really count. (Thanks to Webber's presence, we are now doing so.)

4. I discussed the latest information I had received before leaving regarding visits to Dimona. Both Spencer and Webber were sceptical that the Israelis would agree to two regularly scheduled inspections a year, whether or not in combination with the open safeguards visits, but I said I thought the Israelis might be more sensitive than they imagined to the degree of Presidential concern on this subject.

NEA:NE:WRCrawford:ebb
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