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JAEIC STATEMENT, 1400 HOURS, 2 DECEMBER 1961

ISRAELI PLUTONIUM PRODUCTION

Recent information confirms that France is assisting Israel in the construction of an air-cooled plutonium production reactor possibly producing bi-product power and a plutonium separation plant in the Negev, near Beersheba. France is supplying the plans, the materials, the equipment, technical assistance and also training Israeli personnel. Since there is no large scale native source of uranium ore and no evidence of a uranium metal plant, we believe that the French are also supplying the reactor fuel elements. The natural uranium fuel graphite moderated reactor is believed to have a power of about 200 MW (Thermal). Site preparation began in 1958, construction in 1959, and the reactor is expected to be in operation by mid-1961. Thus Israel could be expected to be able to produce about 30 kilograms of weapon grade plutonium metal by mid-1962 and thereafter produce plutonium at a rate of approximately 60 kilograms a year. She would therefore be in a position to conduct her first weapon test in the latter part of 1962 or early 1963. Since weapon tests in Israel itself would present serious safety difficulties, it is possible that the French test site could be used for this purpose. If French cooperation includes supplying weapon designs, no tests would be

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required and weapons could be stockpiled beginning in the latter half of 1962 or early 1963.

It is believed that the Israeli and/or French Governments will make a statement in regard to this installation within the next few days. The Joint Atomic Energy Intelligence Committee is making a detailed study of this installation, and a more complete statement will be issued when the study is completed.

HERBERT SCOVILLE, JR.
Chairman

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