




DEPARTMENT OF STATE
ACTION MEMORANDUM

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August 13, 1977

TO : The Acting Secretary
FROM : S/AS - Philip J. Farley 
SUBJECT: The South African Nuclear Test Issue:
Next Steps

Issue for Decision

EO25x1 CIA

The purpose of this memorandum is to obtain your approval for steps the US should take within the next few days to deal with the South African nuclear test problem.

Essential Factors

Based on our present information, it appears probable that the SAG has constructed an underground nuclear test facility as claimed by the Soviets. We do not anticipate acquiring additional information in the near term which would permit us to draw a definitive conclusion regarding the nature of this facility or determine whether an actual test is imminent.

We believe it essential that the US act immediately on the basis of current information. Failure to do so might increase the risk that South Africa will in fact explode a nuclear device. Moreover, the USSR, other concerned allies, and Third World countries seem to be looking to us for early action. The South African nuclear situation will be an issue at the Lagos Anti-Apartheid Conference scheduled for August 22. If we hesitate too long, there is a chance that the situation might become uncontrollable through initiatives in the UN Security Council or other measures launched by interested states.

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Next Steps

At this juncture, therefore, we recommend a course of action consisting of the following steps:

A. Instruct Ambassador Bowdler, who returns to Pretoria this weekend, to make a further demarche to the South African Government on Monday, August 15. A telegram instructing the Ambassador to make this demarche is at Attachment 1.

B. Simultaneously, we would respond to the Soviets along the lines of attachment 2, which would be forwarded in draft form to the White House.

C. Early next week, we would approach the French to indicate the "seriousness of our concern, based upon initial independent information regarding the Soviet Union's charges. We would ask the French to join us in an approach to the SAG requesting permission for both governments to undertake on-site inspection to determine the nature of the [redacted] facility, unless the South Africans in the meanwhile propose some equally effective approach. We would also ask them to join us in emphasizing the seriousness of the consequences if South Africa exploded a nuclear device. We believe that the French might well respond positively to this proposal, given their concern over nuclear proliferation, their nuclear supply relationship with South Africa, and their overall diplomatic interests in the African region. French participation would have a major effect in persuading South Africa to accept the proposal, since France is the dominant supplier of equipment for South Africa's nuclear power program. A proposed communication from you to the French Foreign Minister in this connection is at attachment 3.

D. If the French agree, we would coordinate a specific joint approach to the SAG as rapidly as possible, hopefully by Wednesday, August 17. We would raise with France the possibility of adding a third party -- a country such as Canada or the UK which is not a nuclear supplier to South Africa -- to enhance the credibility and acceptability of an on-site inspection. We would also raise the issue of possibly involving IAEA observers in any inspection while acknowledging that the IAEA may find this politically infeasible. If the French do not agree to such a demarche or delay a response for more than two days,

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we would plan to approach the South Africans ourselves or, if possible, together with another appropriate government (or possibly with IAEA observers). In approaching France, we would provide as much detail on our independent information as security considerations permit.

E. After consulting with France, we would approach the SAG alone or with others to request immediate access to the site by US (and other) experts to verify its function. We would make clear that denial of this request, given the existing circumstances, would offer the US no choice but to discontinue all nuclear cooperation with the SAG and to consider other appropriate measures consistent with the seriousness of the situation. Without speaking for the French (or others), we would suggest that major nuclear suppliers, and industrialized states generally, might well react in a comparable manner. We would give the SAG only a few days to reply to our request, in view of the imminence of the Lagos Conference and the risk that with time they may successfully disguise or alter the facility.

F. If the South Africans agree to our request, this will undoubtedly mean that the facility has a purpose other than nuclear testing, and the immediate crisis would be more controllable. Although highly unlikely that they would accept an inspection which could ascertain the existence of a test site, if this occurred we would then insist that the SAG dismantle the facility; declare its intention never to test any nuclear device; place all its nuclear facilities under immediate international safeguards; and initiate steps to ratify the NPT. If the South Africans refuse on-site inspection, but agree to dismantle the Kalahari facility without acknowledging its purpose, this could be an acceptable outcome -- if combined with such conditions as no further testing, complete safeguards, and NPT adherence. At this stage it is unclear whether and to what extent other suppliers would adopt parallel policies.

G. Once we initiate the course of action outlined above, a number of other bases need to be touched. We should contact the Israelis to make certain that they understand our concerns and take no actions to associate themselves with the SAG on this matter. We have to plan strategies for the upcoming Lagos Conference and UN-related initiatives that others might launch. We will also notify the UK, the FRG, Canada, and Japan, of our concerns and proposed course of action. We would ask them to await the

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results of our approach before taking further independent initiatives which might interfere with it. We might also consider an emergency meeting of the Nuclear Supplier Group to consult on joint actions if this step appears appropriate.

Recommendation

1. That you approve the immediate approach to the South Africans and authorize the instruction to Ambassador Bowdler at attachment 1.

Approve _____ Disapprove _____

2. That we forward to the White House the draft text of our reply to the USSR at attachment 2.

Approve _____ Disapprove _____

3. That you approve the telegram to Paris at attachment 3 and the approach outlined in paragraphs C through G above.

Approve _____ Disapprove _____

Attachments:

- 1 - Cable to Ambassador Bowdler
- 2 - Communication to the Soviet Union
- 3 - Communication to French Foreign Minister

Drafted by: PM/NPP:GOplinger/S/P:JKahan/
ACDA:RWilliamson/ds
8/13/77 ext 21835

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FOIA(b)(3) - 50 USC 3507 - CIA CIA

ACTION: PRETORIA
: INFO: MOSCOW, PARIS
E.O.: XGDS-1, 2, 3

TAGS: PARM, SF

EO25x1 CIA

SUBJ: Possible South African Nuclear Weapons Program
REF: Pretoria 4021, State 188207
EYES ONLY FOR THE CHARGE AND AMBASSADOR FROM THE ACTING SECRETARY

1. As a result of information passed us by Soviets (Ref. B), we have made careful review [redacted]

We have now concluded that there is a substantial probability that the site we have identified [redacted] is an underground nuclear test facility. While this evidence is not entirely conclusive, when combined with prior evidence of an unsafeguarded enrichment plant capable of producing highly enriched uranium, and evidence of weapons related R&D, it now appears likely that South Africans are engaged in nuclear explosives program, and are further along than we realized previously.

2. Longer-range strategy for preventing South Africa from becoming a nuclear weapons state, as well as follow-on steps we and others might take to achieve that goal, are still under consideration here. However, situation is sufficiently serious to justify immediate actions to warn the South Africans in unambiguous terms of the grave consequences of a nuclear test or other steps in the direction of acquiring nuclear weapons.

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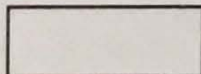
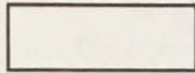
3. Ambassador is accordingly requested to discuss issue with Botha as quickly as possible, drawing on the following points:

(a) We have noted your previous assurances that your nuclear program is devoted exclusively to peaceful purposes. On the basis of our independent investigation, we have concluded that there is substantial evidence to support the Soviet allegations. Moreover, the possession by South Africa of an unsafeguarded enrichment plant, and your persistent delay in adhering to the NPT, have always been grounds for concern.

(b) In light of the grave implications, the President has instructed me to make clear that any further steps [] to acquire or develop a nuclear explosive capability and above all the detonation of a nuclear device--whether a nuclear weapon or a so-called peaceful nuclear explosive--would have the most serious consequences for all aspects of our relations, and would be considered by us as a serious threat to the peace.

(c) We have this matter under urgent consideration, and will raise with you in the next few days the steps we believe are needed to resolve this issue. However, in the immediate future, we believe it is in your own interest to put these concerns to rest. Assurances, such as those given on August 10

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DRAFT: ACDA/NP:RLWilliamson/S/AS:Mr. Farley

APPROVE: The Acting Secretary

CLEARANCES:

IO - Mr. Barry

ACDA - Mr. Van Doren

PM - Mr. Oplinger

S/P - Mr. Kreisberg

EUR - Mr. Luers

T - Mr. Sheinman

AF/S - Mr. Keogh

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DRAFT TELEGRAM

TO: PARIS

INFO: PRETORIA, MOSCOW

E.O. 11652: XGDS-1

TAGS: PARM, MNUC, FR, SA

SUBJECT: South African Nuclear Test Issue

TO AMBASSADOR HARTMAN FROM THE SECRETARY

1. Please deliver the following message from the Secretary to Guiringaud as soon as possible:

2. QUOTE Dear Mr. Minister:

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US [redacted] information confirms the existence [redacted] as recently claimed by the USSR, of a facility which appears to have many of the essential characteristics of an underground nuclear test site. We are unable to conclude definitively that this facility is indeed such a site or to assess whether an actual test might be imminent, but on the basis of our present information, we believe that the Soviet allegations must be taken with the utmost seriousness.

As the two most important suppliers of nuclear equipment and materials to South Africa, I believe the United States and France have an urgent and grave responsibility to do everything possible to establish conclusively whether the suspected facility is a nuclear test site and to prevent a nuclear explosion from taking place. We have approached the South African Government to express our serious concern

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over the Soviet allegations and to request clarification of South African intentions; their initial response asserted simply that South Africa's nuclear program was devoted solely to "peaceful purposes" -- a position reminiscent of India's position in connection with its 1974 nuclear test.

As a next step, we are informing the South African Government that information available to us independently leads us to believe that the Soviet allegation of a nuclear test site has a substantial basis, ^{that} this is a matter of deep concern to the United States; ^{and that} any nuclear explosion would of course have the gravest consequences. We would ask for unequivocal confirmation or denial of the existence of such a facility, without regard to whether its purpose is characterized as peaceful or otherwise.

Unless South Africa quickly and persuasively demonstrates that there are no grounds for concern, we intend, by the middle of next week, to request South African permission for an on-site inspection at the earliest possible time. We believe that the effectiveness of this action would be greatly enhanced if France were to join with us in the request and participate in any inspection which may result.

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I therefore ask you to consider whether you can join us in an approach which we regard as of fundamental importance to our mutual non-proliferation interests, and to international peace

In order to give maximum credibility to any inspection which might result, we see some merit in associating some third country such as Canada (or entity such as the IAEA) in this approach, which has no commercial or other interest that would make the findings of the inspection team suspect. We would appreciate any views you may have on this question.

We wish to make this/ ^{further} approach to the South African Government on or about August 17 in order to avoid a situation where an explosion might take place or the matter might be brought before the United Nations Security Council and precipitate actions taken before we are able to take effective steps to deal with ^{the} problem. We are providing an interim response to the USSR indicating that we take their statement most seriously and asking that they avoid any immediate action in the next week which would prejudice practical steps to avoid an explosion.

I believe that as major suppliers to South Africa, the US and France will be seen as bearing an important measure of responsibility for nuclear developments in that country. How we respond to this situation will also be seen as a test

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of effectiveness of supplier cooperation in inhibiting nuclear proliferation. Given the urgency of this problem, I feel impelled to ask for your urgent consideration of our proposal. SIGNED CYRUS VANCE. UNQUOTE

3. We are providing details of sensitive information independently available to US by separate channel for your use with French as appropriate.

Drafted by:PM/NPP:GOplinger/ds

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