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11 August 1978

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(S)MEMORANDUM FOR: National Intelligence Officer for
Nuclear ProliferationSUBJECT : Review of The Nuclear Axis

1. At your request, [REDACTED] of this Branch has reviewed the book The Nuclear Axis. His comments on the book are given below.
2. The authors of The Nuclear Axis contend primarily that:
 - a. South Africa possesses nuclear weapons, and
 - b. Israel, Iran, France, West Germany, and the United States made essential contributions to South Africa's nuclear weapons production capability.

They purport to cite evidence supporting this contention, drawing heavily on press articles, testimony by US government officials, and documents apparently stolen from the South African embassy in West Germany several years ago.

3. The evidence presented to support the first contention is circumstantial. The authors demonstrate successfully that South Africa has a capability to produce nuclear weapons and then, often employing flawed logic and insinuation, portray South Africa as having exploited that capability. They may be right, of course, but the book does not offer convincing arguments to that effect.

4. The authors cite instances of cooperation and commercial transactions between South Africa and other countries in the military field and arms trade, and then describe cooperation in the peaceful applications of nuclear energy, pointing to the confidential manner in which much of this business was conducted as revealing underlying nefarious purposes. Most of the information concerning dealings with the US, France, and West Germany is factual and accurate but not particularly relevant to the question of South African nuclear weapons capability. Examples are the

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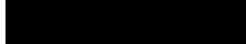
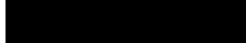

detailed discussions of the French (Koeberg) reactor deal and German participation in uranium mining (Rossing) projects. Some of the information, on the other hand, is both accurate and relevant, such as certain references to the US computer at the Valindaba uranium enrichment plant. None of the information that was provided, however, alters or strengthens our assessment of South Africa's accomplishments in the nuclear weapons field.

5. Most of the substantive statements made or quoted by the authors are known or believed to be true. A number of statements are known or believed to be utterly false, including the notion that South Africa's uranium enrichment plant uses the West German Becker process. Several assertions, for the most part concerning events that took place in the 1960s, provide interesting bits of background information, if true (for example, that the executive chairman of the Atomic Energy Board in the early 1960s was a "rocket expert"). These assertions will be added to our files, along with copies of the purloined South African letters, to be verified or clarified if possible.

7. In sum, The Nuclear Axis offers possible insights into South African attitudes in the 1960s but does not significantly improve our knowledge about the South African nuclear weapons program. A number of false statements and departures from logic reduce the authors' credibility.

Distribution:

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