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DEPARTMENT OF STATE  
OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY

June 6, 1980

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by the author  
12/27/80*

MEMORANDUM FOR THE FILES

Subject: Non-proliferation

During the discussion on this issue, there was a complete unwillingness to discuss implications for revision of US non-proliferation policy on breeder-reactor programs. It was argued that US policy did not discourage breeder-reactor programs and, in fact, was specifically designed not to interfere with breeder-reactor programs.

The perception of US non-proliferation policy is quite different. It is a generally held view that US non-proliferation policy is designed (as is domestic policy) to reduce the tendency towards use of plutonium and light water reactors and towards development of commercial breeder reactors. Whether or not that perception is correct, full implementation of current policy has had that effect.

Ambassador Smith's primary objective in pursuit of authority to negotiate new agreements with our allies, premised on a change in the Carter Administration non-proliferation policy, is primarily directed toward the fulfillment of our allies desires to develop comprehensive commercialized breeder programs.

Neither Ambassador Smith nor his colleagues have been forthcoming on this issue. In each instance in which I surfaced the breeder question, I was informed that the breeder issue was not important either substantively or politically, and that the declared policy of the United States was not to interfere with allies programs for research and development of breeder reactors. It was only in the eleventh hour, prior to the Secretary's potential discussion of this issue with the President,

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that Ambassador Smith raised the question of modifying US policy to permit the use of plutonium for demonstration programs. Several American allies are embarked on full-scale commercial demonstration of breeder reactors. These countries consider US non-proliferation policy to be completely contrary to those demonstration programs. Ambassador Smith wishes to change that policy and meet the demands of these countries. There ought to be a full public discussion of the extent to which the United States wants to become involved in the question of breeder reactor development around the world. It ought not be a policy which is derived as a result of negotiations -- the primary purpose of which is either to make life easier for our allies, or because the negotiators are committed to advanced nuclear power development.

Leon Billings

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