

NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL

*File - Nuclear
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August 19, 1977

INFORMATION

MEMORANDUM FOR: ZBIGNIEW BRZEZINSKI
FROM: HENRY RICHARDSON *HR*
SUBJECT: South African Nuclear Problem

These thoughts at this moment. Brand Fourie's reply to Vance's telegram -- his calmness and his unwillingness to immediately contact Botha or Vorster -- provide additional indication that they are stonewalling to buy time for some later event which probably is already in motion. It could be denuding the facility of incriminating material. It could be, less likely, the preparations for an early nuclear detonation.

There is, of course, the chance that they may be telling the truth. If so, they could be stringing us along so they can make fools of us, preferably in front of the Nationalist Party Congresses opening next week. To prevent against this possibility, we might phrase all our operative language in the conditional tense, e.g. "Pending further proof, we believe...".

But the balance of the best evidence we have is that it is a nuclear test facility, and therefore we must go with that, pending more credible information.

The following is a tentative scenario aiming to apply increasing pressure towards getting an inspection and other steps constituting satisfaction.

1. An immediate, stronger request from Vance back to Botha that they agree immediately to an inspection. Reiterate the pressures

NLC Review Completed.

MORI/CDF per C03419840.

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State Dept. review completed

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on us to go public, which we will in some way respond to, depending on them, and our seriousness on this matter beyond Lagos. Keep the French fully informed and urge them to join the demarche and inspection.

2. Young drafts a strong conditional statement at Lagos into his speech based on our initial strong demarche, but holds it until further word from us.

3. If by Monday we get no satisfactory response from the South Africans, the President sends Vorster a letter mentioning mild appreciation on the more or less helpful trip Botha just made to Salisbury, reiterates our seriousness, requests an immediate inspection plus other measures, such as adherence to the NPT, which will give assurances to the world community, with a strong hint at Security Council and other sanctions beyond Lagos if satisfaction is not given. Keep in close touch with the French, British and Germans, and invite similar letters from them (at the request of the President).

4. Young, in strictest confidence, generally briefs Obasanjo; Spain briefs Nyerere.

5. Meanwhile, keep close watch on any move towards the Lagos Conference calling for Security Council sanctions against (directly or indirectly) South Africa, and instruct Andy to stay neutral; in any case, throughout the Conference, we should do nothing more negative on that point than abstain, unless the South Africans do something spectacularly cooperative. (We could so inform the South Africans) If events warrant it, try to construct a Western Front at Lagos (including the USSR) behind remaining either neutral or tilting in favor of Security Council action. If South Africa is still recalcitrant at the end of the Conference, seriously consider voting "yes" on a final communique incorporating an SC reference.

6. If South Africa continues to be unavailing:

-- Move to call a London Nuclear Suppliers Group meeting at the earliest moment.

-- Notify South Africa that we will take the steps below, if we get no satisfaction.

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-- Let it be known publicly that we will not discourage Security Council action on either Rhodesia or South Africa.

-- A public statement by Vance and hopefully the French setting out the gist of our strong demarche, a history of our efforts and South African refusal, a public demand for them to adhere to the NPT, and declare our Security Council intentions. (We will in no case cast a veto on an indirect sanction against South Africa framed around Rhodesia, but publicly reserve our options on direct South African sanctions.)

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NOTE: I have just spoken to [redacted] CIA. Their preliminary but confident assessment is that the chances are negligible that the South African facility, which we have identified, is anything other than a nuclear test facility. [redacted] does not believe that any subsequent assessment (which will be here in writing on Monday) will differ significantly from this conclusion.

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