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ACTION: AmEmbassy TEL AVIV DEPARTMENT OF STATE

MAR 19 3 10 PM '64

Info:

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Please convey following message to Eshkol from President:

QUOTE

March 19, 1964

Dear Mr. Prime Minister:

I am distressed to learn from Ambassador Barbour that you feel unable to approve of our reassuring President Nasser about the peaceful character of the Dimona reactor. We are far from confident that apprehension as to Israel's atomic potential will, as you suggest, help deter Nasser from attacking Israel. Quite the contrary, we believe that Nasser's fear of a developing Israeli nuclear power may drive him to a choice between accelerating the UAR military build-up or a desperate pre-emptive attack. Either of these choices would have the gravest effects on the security of Israel, We think it plain that any possible deterrent value that might come from keeping Nasser in the dark is trivial compared to these risks.

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Authority NW 64112  
By DM/Bly NARA Date 3/3/2000

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Drafted by:

Text received from WH:mj 3/19/64

Telegraphic transmission and

classification approved by:

S/S - Mr. McKesson

Clearances:

NE - Mr. Davies

White House - Mr. Bundy

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M - Gov. Harriman

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It is also hard to see how Nasser could adversely exploit reassurance that Israel's nuclear activities are for peaceful purposes. We certainly do not intend to provide him with details. Nor did he misuse our reassurances when, with the agreement of your government, we last informed him along these lines. Indeed our doing so served to ease Arab-Israeli tensions.

Therefore I hope you will reconsider your decision on this matter, on which I am sure you will agree that our ultimate interest--enhancement of Israel's security--is the same as yours.

With warm regards,

Sincerely,

Lyndon B. Johnson.

UNQUOTE

You should make following points orally to Eshkol:

1. Nasser aware past US visits to Dimona and eventually will learn of January visit from other countries Israel has agreed we may take into our confidence. Preferable permit us give Nasser information directly to gain maximum favorable results.

2. Content February 22 Nasser speech not new. Every Arab politician must inveigh against Israel to survive politically. Realistic and moderate resolutions taken by Arab Summit Conference reflect

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Nasser's position more clearly than his words.

3. Al-Ahram editorialist Hassanain Haikal, confidant of Nasser, has publicly voiced UAR recognition that war against Israel is not possible because of US support.

4. Israel's security lies in US capability and preparedness to ward off aggression. Total security is not possible, however; even US lacks that.

5. Tank issue unrelated to Nasser reassurance.

FYI. Jewish Observer February 14 carried article entitled "Dimona Report Studies" that referred to "a top secret report from American experts who had studied the potentialities of Israel's principal nuclear reactor at Dimona. . ." While word visit not used, idea is implicit especially to those aware already of our earlier inspection. Moreover, early in February Israeli newsman here specifically inquired about US interest in Dimona and rumored visit by US scientific team. END FYI.

END

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**Duplicity, Deception, and Self-Deception: Israel, the United States, and the Dimona Inspections, 1964-65**

2020-11-03