

August 10, 1977

**Letter, Warren Christopher to William Hyland,
'Response to Soviet Message on South Africa'**

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Summary:

This draft reply to Leonid Brezhnev's August 1977 message to Jimmy Carter on the suspicious site in the Kalahari Desert includes a number of interesting points, among them a request for the "geographic coordinates, size, configuration, and exact nature of the facility." Presumably this information would be used by the US to better target its reconnaissance satellites on the site.

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Authority NND 32947By R NAR & Date 5-7-10DEPARTMENT OF STATE
WASHINGTON

August 10, 1977

SECRETMEMORANDUM FOR: MR. WILLIAM G. HYLAND, Acting
Assistant to the President for
National Security AffairsFROM: Warren Christopher, Acting *WC*SUBJECT: Response to Soviet Message on
South Africa

Attached is a draft response to the recent
Soviet message on South African nuclear develop-
ments.

Attachment:

As stated.

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Authority NND 50947

By R NAB & Date 5-7-10D R A F T

I wish to acknowledge, Mr. President, your recent communication which advised the United States that the Soviet Union has information that the Republic of South Africa is completing work on a nuclear weapon and is preparing to test such weapons.

Certainly, the United States would view such a development in the Republic of South Africa or elsewhere with grave concern. We agree that, as permanent members of the Security Council of the United Nations who are also parties to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, we share a special responsibility for preventing the emergence of new nuclear weapons states and the proliferation of nuclear weapons.

The United States has taken note of the continued operation of a pilot enrichment facility in South Africa without that nation's having placed it under the safeguards system of the IAEA. However, we have no evidence that would lead us to believe that the Republic of South Africa is developing or preparing to test a nuclear weapon.

The Soviet Union's statement refers to the existence of a test site in the Kalahari Desert. We are closely looking into this, and it would be very helpful to us if the Soviet Union would provide as many details as possible about this

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test site. For example, it would be helpful if we could be informed of the geographic coordinates, size, configuration and exact nature of the facility and any other information which would provide a basis for forming an independent judgment as to the probability of a test explosion.

For our part, in light of your message, I instructed my representative to raise with the Government of South Africa the question of nuclear weapons development and again to urge adherence to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty. The Government of South Africa assured us in absolute terms that nuclear energy in South Africa will be used exclusively for peaceful purposes.

We wish to point out our concern that such a serious matter was brought to our attention by the Soviet Union in connection with release of a press statement in Moscow. The Soviet Union will recall that when, in the course of our consultations on non-proliferation, the United States has raised sensitive questions with the Soviet Union, we have avoided public comment.

I can assure you, Mr. President, that the United States is prepared to seriously examine any evidence

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the Soviet Union has for its assertions regarding South Africa. We are prepared to exchange views and to bend our efforts to halt the spread of nuclear weapons wherever the problem may arise. We believe that such an approach can contribute to the development of confidence between us and the Soviet Union on this important subject.