MEMORANDUM FOR THE PRESIDENT

January 30, 1961

Subject: Your Appointment with Ogden K. Reid, Recently Ambassador to Israel

Mr. Reid, who has just resigned as American Ambassador to Israel, made a creditable record during his eighteen months' tenure. He gained the friendship and respect of Prime Minister Ben-Gurion and Foreign Minister Golda Meir. Both he and his charming wife made an excellent impression on the Israeli public by studying Hebrew and by friendly interest in many aspects of Israeli life. Mr. Reid has effectively represented our country, frequently securing Israeli cooperation in specified courses of action despite delicate and difficult obstacles. Items of current interest in our relations with Israel include:

1. Israel's Atomic Energy Activities. Since this is an item of special interest in our relations with Israel at this time, I am enclosing a separate memorandum on this subject.

2. Arab-Israel Relations. While progress toward an Arab-Israel settlement has not been achieved, there has been a diminution of border violence and other unfriendly manifestations between the two sides. Mr. Reid may be commended for his efforts during various incipient crises in persuading Ben-Gurion and his government to follow courses of moderation.

3. Israeli's Economic Progress. We have continued our policies of helping Israel's economic growth with programs totalling for FY 1960 approximately $62,500,000. This is slightly over the average United States Government aid extended to Israel over each of the twelve years since its birth. With such assistance as well as contributions from German reparations payments and generous donations from the Jewish groups in this country, Israel has registered remarkable economic progress. At present per capita gross national product is higher than that of several Western European countries.

4. Israeli Security. We agreed last spring to sell Israel important early warning radar equipment but have declined a request for an elaborate and costly ground-to-air missile system on the grounds that we had already assured Israel of similar weapons from the United States. We have made it very clear that this is an arms embargo and dangerous to Israeli security. We have discussed this also with...
our policy of recent years of not becoming a supplier of significant types or amounts of arms to nations of the Near East. Although posing somewhat of a financial burden, Israel has been able to procure most of its military supplies from France and other European sources.

A brief biographical sketch of Ambassador Reid is enclosed, along with the special memorandum concerning Israel's atomic energy activities.
MEmorandum FOR THE PRESIDENT

Subject: Israel's Atomic Energy Activities

In 1965 under the "Atoms-for-Peace" program the United States
undertook to assist Israel with its atomic energy development program.
Subsequently a new megawatt research reactor was built with our aid at
Haifa in the town of Haifa, near Tel Aviv.

In the summer and early fall of 1966 rumers reached our Embassy
at Tel Aviv that the French were collaborating with the Israelis in
the construction of a large reactor at Dimona, near Beer-Sheba, in the
northern part of the Negev desert.

Secretary Rusk on December 9 called
in Israeli Ambassador Morin who undertook to obtain full information
from his government. After a number of exchanges, Prime Minister
Ben-Gurion gave us categorical assurances supported by appropriate public
statements to the effect that Israel does not have plans for developing
military or weapons.

The French have also assured us that their assistance is
provided for Israel's atomic energy program being solely for peaceful
purposes. Ben-Gurion has indicated that aside from normal military
procedures the reason for Israel's extreme secrecy with respect to the
Dimona project was his fear and that of the foreign firms assisting the
project that the Arab states would boycott or take other retaliatory
measures against any firm or even country assisting the project. There
is considerable justification for this Israeli reasoning.

Our government's concern was two-fold: a) pursuant to Congressional
legislation and firm executive branch policy the United States is opposed
to the proliferation of nuclear weapons capabilities; and b) Israeli's
acquisition of nuclear weapons would have grave repercussions in the
Middle East, not the least of which might be the probable stationing of
Soviet nuclear weapons on the soil of Israel's embittered Arab neighbors.

The Israeli and French assurances which we have received appear to
be satisfactory, although several minor questions still require
clarification. In any case, the Department considers this not a single
episode but a continuing subject and it is the intention of our intel-
ligence agencies to maintain a continuing watch on Israel as on other
countries to ensure that nuclear weapons capabilities are not being
proliferated. At the moment, we are encouraging the Israelis to permit
a qualified scientist from the United States or other friendly power to
visit the Dimona installation. Prime Minister Ben-Gurion has indicated
that this may be possible at an early date.

A full chronology of our interest in Israel's atomic energy activities is attached in the event that it may be of interest to you.

S/S DEAN RUSK

Dean Rusk

S/S - RO
JAN 30 1961
A true copy of signed original

Enclosure:

Chronology of our interest in Israel's atomic energy activities.

HEADS: ARMS
1/30/61
Mr. Field was born on June 14, 1907, in New York City. He attended Roosevelt Academy and received an A.B. degree from Yale University in 1929. He served in the United States Army from 1943 to 1946 and in 1946 Captain in the United States Army Reserve.

Mr. Field joined the staff of the New York Times in 1935 and served successively as reporter and assistant editor (head linesman). In 1938 he served on active duty in the administration of the paper in the circulation, advertising, accounting and personnel departments. In May 1939 he became executive and European editor of the New York Times Europe and in March 1941 he was named President and Publisher of the New York Times. Mr. Field continued similarly at the head of the paper until the newspaper was sold in 1942, but has since returned. He was appointed Ambassador to Israel in March 1979 and presented his credentials to President Jimmy Carter on July 5, 1979. Mr. Field resigned effective January 30, 1981 and his future plans are not known to the Department.

Mr. Field is married to the former Mary Louise Covert and they have four children, Andrew, Michael, William Ferguson, and Elizabeth, who were born in Israel during this year. Their home is in the United States in New York, New York.
July 12, 1958  U.S.-Israel Atomic Energy Agreement
May 2, 1958  U.S. agreed to assist one MAGNETON research reactor at Nahal Sabin.

1960
June 14  Embassy Tel Aviv referred in a despatch to "rumors" that French were collaborating with Israelis in an atomic energy project near Beersheba.
Summer  To Embassy officer inquiries, Israelis said, "Textile Plant"
August 2  Embassy Tel Aviv reported U.S. technician's "impression" that French-Israeli atomic energy project being built near Beersheba.
September  To U.S. Service Attaché inquiries, Israelis said, "Metalurgical research installation".
September 19  CIA referred to August 2 report.

October 19  State Department instructed field to provide more information.

November 30  Embassy Tel Aviv reported confirmatory views of visiting Dr. Henry J. Geenberg of Phoenix Project, University of Michigan.

December 1  Philip Varley, Special Assistant for Atomic Energy at the State Department, debriefed Dr. Geenberg in Washington.

December 2  Assessment made by U.S. Joint Atomic Energy Inter-Agency Committee that a 200 magneton reactor appeared under construction near Beersheba.

December 3  Joint AEC Committee in Congress notified.

December 4  Similar conclusion received from United Kingdom.
December 4  Israeli ABC official Sargent for first time confirms to Embassy Tel Aviv that a project is under construction. Discloses proposed public statement.

December 6  Secretary Hart re meeting re course of action, proposed Israeli statement not considered consistent.

December 7  Subject discussed at Operations Coordinating Board.

December 8  Farley briefed Joint ABC Committee.

December 9  National Intelligence Estimate 100-8-68 asserts gravity of potential repercussions.

December 10  Secretary Hart notified US Ambassador that U.S. planned to ask Israelis about project, obtained permission to use US photograph.

December 11  Secretary called in Ambassador Abraham Hoxme who undertook to inquire.

December 9  Secretary also expressed our concern to French Charge d'Affaires.

December 10  Secretary departed for NATO meetings in Paris.

December 13  Time magazine reported a "small power" was developing a nuclear capability.

December 16  Tip-off story in London Daily Express.

December 17  Bureau expressed Department hope that ABC Chairman Meehan would avoid comment in TV debate.

December 18  Meehan on TV said U.S. had asked Israel for information.

December 19  Washington Post carried extensive and fairly accurate story.

December 19  Department issued statement saying Meehan called in December 9.

December 19  Secretary returned from Paris and conferred with President.
December 20

Herman now Secretary

1) Acknowledged 24 megawatt Dimona reactor for research
2) Said began one year ago, will require 3-4 years to complete
3) Assisted by France and in minor way several other countries
4) However, under direction of Israeli scientists
5) Assumed that project was for peaceful uses only
6) When completed, would be open to students from friendly countries
7) Cost $3,000,000 per year exclusive of local costs
8) Ben-Gurion would issue public statement following day
9) Secretary asked additional questions

December 21

Ben-Gurion made statement before Knesset

1) Referred to Rabbi Drubin project
2) Acknowledged 24 megawatt reactor near Beersheba
3) Said it dedicated to scientific research for Negev
4) Completion in 3-4 years
5) Under Israeli direction, will be open to friendly students
6) “Intended exclusively for peaceful purposes”
7) Anticipated future power reactor

December 21

Herman now Assistant Secretary Jones and Farley

1) Presented Ben-Gurion’s statement
2) Explained belated response due to Secretary’s absence
3) Complained about widespread publicity
4) Hoped assurances would preclude “nagging doubt”
5) Was told full factual information best answer

December 22

Department’s Press Statement

1) Restated Herman’s call and Ben-Gurion’s statement
2) Welcomed statements, new second reactor as no sense for special concern
3) Restated U.S. Government’s continuing watchfulness against proliferation

December 23

Department sent background guidance to field posts

December 24

Ambassador said saw Ben-Gurion, suggested safeguards

December 24

Ambassador Herman returned to Israel for consultations
December 31
Ambassador held instructed re specific remaining questions
a) Plutonium, b) visits, c) IAEA safeguards, d) 3rd reactor, e) no weapons

January 4
Ambassador held extensive discussion with Ben-Gurion
a. Plutonium would go to uranium supplier
b. Visits by nationals from friendly powers would be permitted
c. No IAEA safeguards until others agree; "no missiles"
d. No third reactor now contemplated
e. Categoric assurance that no nuclear weapons planned

January 4
Senate asked Secretary for more information re Israeli reactor

January 9
James and Farley reported to Senate Foreign relations subcommittee

January 9
French confirm categorically that their assistance to Israelis is premised entirely on Israel's program being solely for peaceful purposes

January 11
Ambassador Kamen returned from Israel, reported as above to Secretary

January 17
Department instructed Embassy Tel Aviv to keep pressing for early visit to Dimona installations by scientist from a "friendly power"