January 30, 1961
Secretary of State Rusk to President Kennedy, 'Your Appointment with Ogden R. Reid, Recently Ambassador to Israel'

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Memorandum and briefing materials for President Kennedy on the discovery of the Israel Dimona nuclear reactor. Given in preparation for a meeting with Ogden Reid, who had just resigned as US ambassador to Israel.

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THE SECRETARY OF STATE
WASHINGTON

January 30, 1961

MEMORANDUM FOR THE PRESIDENT

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. **Israel'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. **Israel's Security.** We agreed last spring to sell Israel important early warning radar equipment but have declined a request for an elaborate but costly ground-to-air missile system on the grounds that it would make Israel more rather than less vulnerable. On December 31, 1960, the President took a major step toward a closer association with Israel by signing legislation for the construction of a new American Embassy in Tel Aviv.
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 biographic sketch of Ambassador Reid is enclosed, along with the special memorandum concerning Israel's atomic energy activities.
JAN 30 1981

MEMORANDUM FOR THE PRESIDENT

Subject: Israel's Atomic Energy Activities

In 1955 under the "Atoms-for-Peace" program the United States undertook to assist Israel with its atomic energy development program. Subsequently a one megawatt research reactor was built with our aid at Habel Rubin, near Tel Aviv.

In the summer and early fall of 1960 rumors reached our Embassy at Tel Aviv that the French were collaborating with the Israelis in the construction of a large reactor at Dimona, near Beersheba, in the northern part of the Negev desert. Secretary Raker on December 9 called in Israeli Ambassador Harman 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 nuclear weaponry. The French have also assured us that their assistance is promised on Israel's atomic energy program being solely for peaceful purposes. Ben-Gurion has indicated that aside from normal military precautions the reason for Israel's extreme secrecy with respect to the Dimona project was his fear that if the foreign firms assisting the project that the Arab states would boycott or take other retaliatory measures against any firm or entire 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) Israel'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 embattled 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 intelligence agencies to maintain a continuing watch on Israel as an 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/ DEAN RUSK
Dean USA

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

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

RE: AE: AD: ME: VA
1/30/61
Mr. Gold was born on June 26, 1927, in New York City. He attended Cardozo High School and received an A.B. degree from New York University in 1949. He served in the United States Army from 1943 to 1946 and was a captain in the United States Army Reserve.

Mr. Gold joined the staff of the New York Herald Tribune in 1950 and served successively as reporter and editor (the Red Department). In 1953 he served as editor-in-chief in the administration of the paper in the circulation, advertising, classified advertising and promotion departments. In May 1958 he became managing editor and executive editor of the New York Herald Tribune and in April 1960 he was named President and Publisher of The New York Herald Tribune Inc. Mr. Gold continued extensively on the board of directors when the newspaper was sold in 1970, but has since resigned. He was appointed ambassador to Israel in March 1979 and presented his credentials to President Ezer Weizman on July 9, 1979. Mr. Gold resigned effective January 20, 1982 and his future plans are not known to the Department.

Mr. Gold is married to the former Mary Louise Keiser and they have four children, Michael, Richard, William Rogers, and Shulamit, who were born in Israel another this year. Their home in the United States is at Purchase, New York.
HISTORY OF UNITED STATES INTEREST IN ISRAEL'S ATOMIC ENERGY ACTIVITIES

July 12, 1958  U.S.-Israel Atoms-for-Peace Agreement
May 2, 1958  U.S. agreed to assist one megawatt 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 Beer-Sheva.
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 Beer-Sheva.

September  To U.S. Service Attaché inquiries, Israelis said, "Metallurgical 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. Cisneros of Phoenix Project, University of Michigan.

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

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

December 3  Joint AE Committee in Congress notified.

December 4  Similar conclusion received from United Kingdom.
December 4  Israeli AEC official Borjeson for first time confrins
to Embassy Tel Aviv that a project is under
construction, discloses proposed public statement.

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

December 7  Subject discussed by Operations Coordinating Board

December 8  Jarley briefed Joint AEC Committee

December 9  National Intelligence Estimate links 10-8-66 attack gravity
of potential repercussions.

December 10  Secretary Harken 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 Hassen who
undertook to inquire.

December 12  Secretary also expressed our concern to French Charge
d'Affaires.

December 13  Secretary departed for NATO meetings in Paris.

December 14  Time magazine reported a "small power" was developing
a nuclear capability.


December 16  Hassen expressed Department hope that AEC Chairman
McNose would avoid comment in TV-intent.

December 17  McNose on TV said U.S. had asked Israel for information.

December 18  Washington Post carried extensive and fairly accurate
story.

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

December 19  Secretary returned from Paris and conferred with
President.
Herman new Secretary

1) Acknowledged 24 magnetit Bismac 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) Assured that project was for peaceful uses only
6) When completed, would be open to students from friendly countries
7) Cost $1,000,000 per year exclusive of local assets
8) Ben-Gurion would issue public statement following day
9) Secretary asked additional questions

December 22

Ben-Gurion made statement before Knesset

1) Referred to Nebl Rubin project
2) Acknowledged 24 magnetit reactor near Beersheva
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 new 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 textual information would answer

December 22

Department’s Press Statement

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

December 24

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
Ambassador told instructed re specific remaining questions:

a) Plutonium, b) Visits, c) IAEA safeguards, d) 3rd reactor, e) no weapons

1961

January 1

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 missions”.
d. No third reactor now contemplated
e. Categorical assurance that no nuclear weapons planned.

Foreign Relations Committee

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 pledged entirely on Israel's program being solely for peaceful purposes.

January 11

Ambassador returns 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"