

**August 18, 1977**

**Letter, US Ambassador Bowdler to South African  
Foreign Minister Botha**

**Citation:**

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**Summary:**

Message from U.S. Ambassador Bowdler to the South African Minister of Foreign Affairs Botha in which President Carter's warning that the detonation of a South African nuclear device would have "most serious consequences" for U.S.-South African relations was conveyed.

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S E C R E T

MESSAGE CONVEYED TO MINISTER OF FOREIGN  
AFFAIRS BY US AMBASSADOR W BOWDLER

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Pretoria, 18 August 1977, 2.15 p.m.

We have noted your previous assurances that your nuclear programme is devoted exclusively to peaceful purposes. However, the possession by South Africa of an unsafeguarded enrichment plant and your persistent delay in adhering to the NPT have always been grounds for concern as you know. On the basis of an independent investigation we have substantial evidence which appears to be contrary to your assurances. In the light of the grave implications President Carter has instructed me to make clear that the detonation of a nuclear device whether a nuclear weapon or a so-called peaceful nuclear explosive or any further steps to acquire or develop a nuclear explosive capability would have the most serious consequences for all aspects of our relations and would be considered by us as a serious threat to the peace. Under these circumstances you should know that we do not believe that South Africa could continue to count on help from the Western Powers in any field and you should also be aware of the possibility that the issue may arise in the United Nations Security Council on short notice with unforeseeable results. We have this matter under urgent consideration and will raise with you in the next few days the steps we believe are needed to resolve this issue. However, in the immediate future we believe it is in your own interest to put these concerns to rest. Assurances such as those which van Dalsen gave to Nelson on August 10 <sup>cannot</sup> ~~could~~ resolve these doubts. Instead we believe

- 2 -

that you should find means to prove in a publicly persuasive way that you are not developing the Kalahari facility as a nuclear test site and that your pilot enrichment plant is not and will not be used to produce enriched uranium for any explosive purpose.