

August 11, 1965

Cable 786 from the US Embassy in France to the Department of State

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Summary:

The US Embassy in France noted that Gabon produced about 440 tons of uranium metal annually, and any diversions would occur under French, rather than Gabonese, authority.

Credits:

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INCOMING TELEGRAM Department of State

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Action

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Info

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L I M D I S

LIBREVILLE'S 364

INCO Uranium Gabon

*Power 786
8/11/65*

PARIS DOES NOT HAVE COPY DEPTTEL 131 TO LIBREVILLE BUT BELIEVE FOLLOWING COMMENTS MAY BE PERTINENT:

1. TO EMBASSY'S BEST KNOWLEDGE, PRODUCTION AND EXPORT GABONESE URANIUM COMPLETELY IN FRENCH HANDS, VIZ. COMPAGNIE DE FRANCEVILLE AND ENTIRE PRODUCTION OF APPROX. 440 TONS PER ANNUM CONTAINED URANIUM METAL IS SHIPPED TO FRANCE.
2. IN VIEW PRESUMED FRENCH INTEREST IN STRINGENTLY REGULATING ISRAELI ACCESS TO URANIUM ORE, SEEMS REASONABLE TO ASSUME THAT DIVERSIONS, IF ANY, WOULD OCCUR UNDER FRENCH RATHER THAN GABONESE CONTROL. DOUBTFUL FRENCH WOULD ALLOW GABONESE SUFFICIENT FREEDOM OF ACTION UNDERTAKE DIVERSION. EMBASSY DEFERS TO LIBREVILLE ON QUESTION WHETHER GABONESE PHYSICALLY ABLE DIVERT ORE WITHOUT KNOWLEDGE FRENCH BUT THIS SEEMS FROM HERE A PRIORI UNLIKELY. IN ANY EVENT, REPORTS AVAILABLE TO USG OF PREVIOUS ISRAELI ATTEMPT PURCHASE URANIUM FROM GABON WHICH FOILED BY GOF (TDCS DB 3/654990 OF 10 JUNE 1963, WHICH NOT LOCALLY AVAILABLE, BELIEVED DEAL WITH SUBJECT) POINTS IN THIS DIRECTION.
3. QUESTION ARISES WHETHER FRENCH NOW HAVE INTEREST IN FOSTERING ACQUISITION BY ISRAEL OF TYPE AND QUANTITY FISSILE MATERIAL REQUIRED FOR DEVELOPEMENT NUCLEAR WEAPONS CAPABILITY. INDICATIONS GOF'S CURRENT ATTITUDE REACHING EMBASSY REPORTED INTERALIA POLTO 935 EMBTELS 5925, 183 AND 341. EMBASSY INCLINED TO VIEW THAT THESE INDICATIONS ACCURATELY REFLECT GOF'S PRESENT INTERESTS.
CAS CONCURS.

COMMENT: AS DEPT AWARE FRENCH ALSO DEVELOPING URANIUM FIND IN CENTRAL AFRICAN REPUBLIC. GP-1. MCBRIDE

SECRET

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