

April 11, 1961

**Memorandum by Assistant Secretary Jones to
Secretary of State Rusk, 'Your Appointment with
Israeli Ambassador Harman'**

Citation:

"Memorandum by Assistant Secretary Jones to Secretary of State Rusk, 'Your Appointment with Israeli Ambassador Harman'", April 11, 1961, Wilson Center Digital Archive, RG 59, DF, 033.84A11/4-1161. Obtained by William Burr. Originally published in Avner Cohen and William Burr, eds., National Security Archive Electronic Briefing Book #547 (April 21, 2016). <https://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/123824>

Summary:

Jones informs Rusk that Israel is ready to allow a US visit to Dimona, but it must be kept secret. Jones also informed Rusk that the Atomic Energy Commission had selected two of its scientists to make the visit: Ulysses Staebler, assistant director of reactor development and chief of the Civilian Power Reactors Branch, and Jesse Croach Jr., a heavy water reactor expert with Dupont, the AEC's principal contractor for heavy water reactor work.

Credits:

This document was made possible with support from Carnegie Corporation of New York (CCNY)

Original Language:

English

Contents:

Original Scan

SECRET

Original Scan
3.00
5772

DEPARTMENT OF STATE
ASSISTANT SECRETARY

Content consists of 2 pages.
1 of 1 copies, Status A

TO : The Secretary

THROUGH: S/S *TD*

FROM : ~~NSA~~ - G. Lewis Jones *[Signature]*

APR 11 1961

RMR

SUBJECT: Your Appointment with Israel Ambassador Harman, 3 p.m.,
Wednesday, April 12 (Supplemental)

DISCUSSION:

Ambassador Harman is coming in at his request to propose a United States visit by Prime Minister Ben-Gurion. Following your discussion of this subject, you may wish to comment on his Government's invitation (CF. attached memorandum of conversation) for an American scientist to visit the Dimona reactor site during the week of May 15.

x R 884a 1901

In discussing the invitation with Mr. Farley of S/AE and me on April 10, Ambassador Harman stressed his Government's fear of publicity and speculation of the sort that surrounded the original revelation that Israel was developing the reactor. He asked that the visit be kept a secret both before and after.

In view of the continued Congressional interest as well as the interest in both political and intelligence circles of the Executive Branch, it seems unrealistic to count on the visit being kept secret. It seems to us to defeat the objective of establishing that the reactor is a normal civilian atomic project if extreme measures of secrecy are taken in connection with the visit. If the efforts at secrecy fail, the attempt will itself heighten suspicion and speculation. A much simpler approach with much less risk is that suggested in the recommendations below.

It is our view that a visit to determine the nature and scope of the Israel development is of the utmost importance, both from the standpoint of our own political requirements and our relations with other states, who have looked to us for an assessment of its significance. We agree with the Israelis that until we have the report of our scientists the visit can be closely held, but sooner or later we must have sufficient latitude to meet the above objectives.

AEC has selected Dr. Ulysses Staebler, Sr., Assistant Director of Reactor Development and Chief of the Civilian Power Reactors Branch, and Jesse Croach, Jr., a heavy water reactor expert from Dupont (AEC's principal contractor for heavy water reactor work) to make the visit. They will be prepared to go during the week of May 15 if necessary, though they would prefer the following week.

RA

SECRET

RECOMMENDATIONS:

SUBMITTED FILE

033-84011-14-1161 FILED

APR 18 1961

Authority ND 949651ATTACHMENTS:

You may wish to make the following points:

1. Express appreciation for the invitation.
2. Assure the Ambassador that the United States also wishes the visit to be a quiet one and would do all it could to avoid a new round of publicity. However, a number of people will have to be informed sooner or later that a visit has been made. To surround the visit with excessive secrecy would give the appearance of connivance and might stir up renewed speculation about the project. The result we both desire is to remove any basis for lingering doubt. We suggest that the visit should be closely held and certainly not publicized, but every effort should be made to avoid a "cloak and dagger" aspect.
3. We favor a visit by two U.S. heavy water experts for quiet technical discussions with their Israel counterparts. The visit to the Dimona site could be a natural, incidental feature conducted without either ostentation or furtiveness.
4. This Government will begin consideration of suitable U.S. experts, but, in the meantime, would hope that our views on the circumstances of the visit can be conveyed to the Israel Government for its comment.

(NOTE: In view of the President's keen interest in the reactor, you may wish to seek an early opportunity to inform him of the import of your conversation with Ambassador Harman).

ATTACHMENT:

Memorandum of Conversation,
dated April 10, 1961.

S/AE:PJFarley/NEA:GLJones/
NEA:NE:WLHamilton:ebb
4/11/61 *WJH*

SECRET