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DEPARTMENT OF STATE

Memorandum of Conversation

DATE: August 13, 1969

SUBJECT: 1969 Dimona Visit

PARTICIPANTS: Dr. Charles H. Reichardt, Director of Intelligence, AEC
 Mr. Charles A. Sommer, Deputy Director of Intelligence, AEC
 Mr. George B. Pleat, Chief of Dimona Inspection Team
 Robert H. Munn, NEA/IAI

The substantive portion of Tel Aviv's 3055 of August 8 was made available to the AEC officers for their comment. Their general feeling is that it would be pointless to engage in debate with the Israelis on the details of whether or not the team's requirements were actually met, since Ambassador Barbour has already made the substantive points outlined in State 124641 in his discussion with the Prime Minister (Tel Aviv 2941 of July 31). The AEC officers had not seen this cable but were apprised of its content. They concur that it would be useful to record a reply to the Israeli description of the "visit" by reaffirming the views expressed by Ambassador Barbour.

Dr. Reichardt will send the Department general comments on the situation in a covering memorandum to be forwarded with copies of the Dimona Inspection Report, which will be forthcoming within a few days. He dictated a draft in my presence. The following will, however, add to his very diplomatic language.

In response to my question of how the frame of reference or guidance for the US team is formulated, the AEC officers reviewed briefly the history of the inspections. From a number of sources, the team has drawn the inference that the US government is not prepared to support a real "inspection" effort in which the team members can feel authorized to ask directly pertinent questions and/or insist on being allowed to look at records, logs, materials and the like. The team has in many subtle ways been cautioned to avoid controversy, "be gentlemen" and not take issue with the obvious will of the hosts. On one occasion it seems that the team was criticized roundly by the Israelis for having "acted like inspectors" and the criticism was passed on rather than refuted.

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In the absence of a positive mandate to inspect with all that word implies, the team has felt constrained to accept the ground rules made evident by their host, leading to the present situation in which a "visit" is conducted rather than an "inspection." The team therefore did not make an issue of the fact that the program drawn up by Israel shifted timing and focus in important ways which limited their access to key facilities. Nor did they take issue with their host's obvious pushing and hurrying past points at which they indicated a desire for a closer look. The fact that the team avoided creating issues can give rise to the semantic interpretation that what went on satisfied them, which is in essence what the Israelis replied to the Embassy. There is no doubt whatever in the mind of the chief of the team but that his hosts effectively tailored the occasion as a "visit" to suit their own purposes: they took great care to emphasize at the outset that it was a visit and nothing more, and obviously relied on the good manners and restraint of the team members to avoid challenges of substance.

COMMENT

It is clear to me from the discussion that visits conducted under these approaches may even be counter-productive, leaving Israel in the position of pointing them out as evidence of "cooperation" or "US satisfaction" at some key juncture in the future. It also seems to me that we have within our own purview the ability to make the occasions more meaningful by instructing the team to take a positive approach to inspection, asking for all the access and information they deem required, and leaving it to the Israelis either to accede or make positive denials of what is requested. At the least, that course would place responsibility where it must rest rather than avoiding the real issues in a manner which prejudices our interests.

cc: NEA - Mr. Davies
INR - Mr. Hughes
AEC - Dr. Reichardt

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