

Foreign Relations, 1961-1963, Volume XVII, Near East,

Israel's nuclear program;

Israeli willingness to have U.S. scientist visit Dimona reactor.

3. Letter From the Assistant Secretary of State for Congressional Relations (Macomber) to the Executive Director of the Joint Congressional Committee on Atomic Energy (Ramey)/1/

Washington, January 19, 1961.

/1/Source: Department of State

Central Files, 884A.1901/1-1961.

Secret.

Drafted by Farley (S/AE) on January 17 and cleared by Meyer (NEA/NE) and Schnee (H).

Copies of the letter and its enclosures were sent to the Atomic Energy Commission and the Central Intelligence Agency.

Dear Mr. Ramey:

At the conclusion of the closed hearing on December 9, 1960, Representative Durham requested Mr. Farley to inform the Joint Committee on Atomic Energy of subsequent information received concerning the Israeli atomic energy program. **Mr. Farley subsequently advised the Committee staff that, at the first meeting between Secretary Herter and the Israeli Ambassador later on December 9, the Ambassador disclaimed any detailed knowledge of the reactor installation near Dimona. Our inquiries of the Israeli Government and also of the French Government have been pressed since that time.** In accordance with the Committee's request and Mr. Farley's telephone conversation with Mr. Conway on January 13, the enclosed summary of the information obtained is submitted for the information of the Committee. Also attached for your convenience is a compilation of public statements./2/ **Attached but not printed.** Responsible officers of the Department of State will be available to discuss this information with the Committee if desired.

The official statements which the Israeli and French Governments have now given us are unequivocal as to the non-military character of the Israeli program and French assistance to it. We do not anticipate that these Governments will provide us with significant additional information in the near future. You will note, however, that we have been given formal assurance that visitors from the United States or another friendly country will be received when the present intense public interest in the question has subsided. We believe that this will be very helpful in providing first-hand reassurance, and we intend to follow up this offer at an early date.

Any possibility of proliferation of nuclear weapons--particularly in the Middle East--obviously is a matter of grave concern to the Department. We shall continue to follow this matter closely. We do not believe, however, that extended public speculation regarding the Israeli atomic energy program will advance the interests of the United States, and we have taken and will continue to take any feasible measures to damp down speculation on this matter and in particular to avoid giving occasion for renewed suspicions and possible undesirable reactions in the Arab world. We believe that persistent but quiet diplomatic approaches are most likely to be productive.

The continued cooperation of the Joint Committee in avoiding public comment is most helpful in this regard.

Sincerely yours,

William B. Macomber, Jr./3/ /3/Printed from a copy that indicates Macomber signed the original.