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Series A.

DEPARTMENT OF STATE

Memorandum of Conversation

DATE: April 17, 1961

SUBJECT: U.S. Visit to Dimona

PARTICIPANTS: Mr. Mordechai Gazit, Minister Plenipotentiary, Embassy of Israel
Mr. Lewis Jones, Assistant Secretary, NEA

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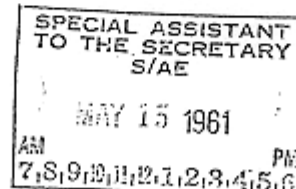
I was able today to speak to Gazit, Minister of the Israeli Embassy, along the lines of NE's memorandum to the Secretary of State. I expressed appreciation for the invitation for two Americans to visit Dimona and said that the details should be worked out between Mr. Farley of S/AE and the Israeli Embassy.

I said that Ambassador Harman had used the word "secret" in describing the visit: this word gave us some concern. An absolutely secret visit would involve clandestine arrangements such as cover for the individuals, specially prepared passports and the other paraphernalia of "secret" operations. The individuals we had in mind to go to Dimona were responsible scientists who would not lend themselves to such deception.

All along we had had in mind a "quiet" visit by which we meant an unpublicized visit. The U. S. Government would take no initiative in seeking to obtain publicity; we would discourage publicity. On the other hand if there should be leaks from one place or another in the United States Government or from the Congress about the visit we would not like to be accused of violating a promise of "secrecy". Following the visit a number of individuals would have to be informed both within the Government and in the Congress and Washington was not the kind of place, nor was this the kind of subject, lending itself to absolute "secrecy".

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Gazit readily took my point and said that he understood the distinction which I was drawing between "secret" and "quiet". He would report to his Government. Meanwhile the Israeli Embassy looked forward to hearing further from Mr. Farley with regard to who would be going.

Some general conversation followed in which I reminded Gazit of Mr. Farley's idea that our two heavy water experts might go to Israel to talk with their Israeli counterparts in the course of which, almost casually, they might be invited to visit Dimona. I said that our experts might stay in private homes while in Israel but they would use their own passports and I had little doubt that the GOI once they were in Israel could keep them out of the limelight. Gazit agreed.

Saying that I was speaking very "generally" I told Gazit that we thought it desirable from Israel's point of view that sooner or later the results of the visit should become generally known, at least to our friends and allies such as the United Kingdom which was also concerned. Gazit replied that for the moment the invitation had been extended only to the United States: he said that if, after the visit takes place, the U. S. were to ask the GOI whether it might pass on its findings to the UK this request to pass the information on would be considered by the GOI. He opined that Mr. Ben Gurion's reaction might be "what concern is Dimona to the UK?"

Comment: Gazit did not seem particularly disturbed: he indicated that there should be some careful coordination between the GOI and Mr. Farley regarding the details of the visit. He said that the Israeli Embassy would wait word from Mr. Farley.

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