

Foreign Relations, 1961-1963, Volume XVIII, Near East, 1962-1963

Released by the Office of the Historian

National Security Action Memorandum No. 231/1/

Washington, March 26, 1963.

1/Source: Department of State, S/S - NSC Files: Lot 72 D 316, NSAM 231. Top Secret. On March 25, McCone met with President Kennedy. According to McCone's record of the meeting, he raised the "question of Israel acquiring nuclear capability" and gave the President Document 179. The President then instructed Bundy "to direct a letter to Secretary Rusk asking that he, in collaboration with DCI and Chairman, AEC, submit a proposal as to how some form of international or bilateral US safeguards could be instituted to protect against the contingency mentioned." (Central Intelligence Agency, Job 80 D 01285A, DCI (McCone) Files, Memoranda for the Record)

TO
The Secretary of State

Chairman, Atomic Energy Commission

Director of Central Intelligence

SUBJECT

Middle Eastern Nuclear Capabilities

The President desires, as a **matter of urgency**, that we undertake every feasible measure to improve our intelligence on the Israeli nuclear program as well as other Israeli and UAR advanced weapon programs, and to arrive at a firmer evaluation of their import. In this connection he wishes the next informal inspection of the Israeli reactor complex to be undertaken promptly and to be as thorough as possible.

In view of his **great concern over the destabilizing impact** of any Israeli or UAR program looking toward the development of nuclear weapons, the President also wishes the Department of State to develop proposals for forestalling such programs; in particular we should develop plans for seeking clearer assurances from the governments concerned on this point, and means of impressing upon them how seriously such a development would be regarded in this country./2/

/2/On April 5, Brubeck sent Bundy a memorandum by Talbot dated April 3 describing the Department of State's immediate response to NSAM No. 231. The memorandum indicated that the Department had already formed a small working group under the chairmanship of NEA Deputy Assistant Secretary James Grant to pursue an arms limitation and control arrangement in the Near East. To meet the requirements of NSAM No. 231, the Department of State had requested Israel to allow semiannual visits to Dimona. The working group expected to have developed by early May a clear plan of action for securing Israeli-Egyptian agreement on nuclear and missile limitation. (Department of State, S/S - NSC Files: Lot 72 D 316, NSAM 231) Documentation relating to the NEA working group activities is *ibid.*, NEA/IAI Files: Lot 72 D 438, Authority to Consider Steps for NE Arms Limitation Probe, Spring - Summer 1963--NSAM 231. Additional documentation is *ibid.*, S/S Files: Lot 68 D 135, Chron Summary of the Arms Probe with Nasser and Related Events, 1963 - 1964; and NEA/IAI Files: Lot 80 D 102, McCloy Probe.

McGeorge Bundy