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289. Memorandum From the Director of the Defense Intelligence Agency (Carroll) to Secretary of Defense McNamara/1/

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SUBJECT

Preliminary Report on Visit to Israeli Atomic Energy Sites (S/NFD)

1. (S/NFD) A three-man team of U.S. nuclear experts visited Israeli atomic energy sites during the period 31 March to 4 April 1966, and the Atomic Energy Commission (AEC) has submitted a preliminary report on the visit to the U.S. Intelligence Board. The team's observations and conclusions, as stated in the report, are summarized in this memorandum.

2. (S/NFD) In view of Israeli sensitivities associated with the visit and report, the AEC has requested that distribution be limited to those who have specific requirements for the information and that recipients of the report be cautioned of the need to hold the information and even the fact of the visit very closely.

3. (S/NFD) It is the unanimous conclusion of the three-man team that there is no evidence that Israel is producing or intends to produce nuclear weapons material.

The principal observations supporting this judgment are as follows: The Dimona reactor, Israel's only potential source of plutonium for an indigenous nuclear weapons program during the next several years, is being utilized for nuclear research activities and the site has been opened to scientists from the Weizmann Institute at Rehovot and the nuclear research center at Nahal Soreq. Some of the research projects are supported by funds from U.S. Government agencies. The reactor has been operated at significantly reduced power, which is not consistent with a plutonium production effort, and the high irradiation levels at which fuel apparently is to be removed from the reactor would not result in plutonium well suited for use in nuclear weapons. In addition, there is no chemical processing facility at Dimona for the extraction of plutonium from irradiated reactor fuel. Finally, there is no evidence that diversion of the uranium inventory at Dimona has occurred, which supports the judgment that the reactor has been operated at low power and that no unreported fuel has been irradiated and removed from the reactor between U.S. visits.

4. (S/NFD) There is a possibility that the team may have been deliberately deceived by the Israelis, but the members of the team believe that this is unlikely. They felt it would be prudent, however, to note the following reservations: The team could learn nothing about the 80 to 100 tons of uranium concentrate purchased from Argentina. Although the team members are convinced that this uranium has not been delivered to the Dimona site and that the personnel there know nothing about it, this material could have been (or could in the future be) run through the reactor between U.S. visits without being detected as long as the indicated reactor utilization is low. For this reason, there would be some basis for concern if the reactor continues for another year to have a lower operating efficiency. If this is the case next year, the survey team should demand very concrete evidence to explain the failure of the reactor to operate at design power.

5. (S/NFD) The report also points out that the members of the team are not in a position to determine whether a reactor or chemical separation plant exists elsewhere in Israel. With regard to this point, it is highly unlikely that a reactor capable of producing significant quantities of plutonium could be built without being detected. It

is possible, however, that a chemical processing plant capable of separating a few kilograms of plutonium annually could escape detection if a serious effort were made to hide it; such a plant would be very similar to other chemical facilities.

6. (S/NFD) The report of the team of U.S. experts is the best source of information on the Israeli nuclear energy program and there is no convincing intelligence from other sources which is in disagreement with the team's observations and conclusions.

Joseph F. Carroll

Lieutenant General, USAF