

## Foreign Relations, 1961-1963, Volume XVII, Near East, 1961-1962

Released by the Office of the Historian

Documents 66-97

### 95. Paper Prepared by the Joint Chiefs of Staff/1/

JCSM-523-61

Washington, undated.

/1/Source: Department of State, Central Files, 784A.5611/8-1461. Secret. A table of contents and summary are not printed. The source text is undated, but a covering memorandum on the copy in Department of Defense files indicates that Lemnitzer sent the paper to McNamara on August 8 with a recommendation that it be sent to the Department of State for comment. (Washington National Records Center, RG 330, OSD Files: FRC 65 A 3464) The source text was transmitted to the Department of State under cover of a letter of August 14 from Deputy Secretary of Defense Gilpatric to Secretary of State Rusk requesting Department of State consideration of the non-military points being recommended in the paper.

#### A STRATEGIC ANALYSIS OF THE IMPACT OF THE ACQUISITION BY ISRAEL OF A NUCLEAR CAPABILITY

##### I. The Problem

###### 1. To:

- a. Develop a strategic analysis of the impact of the acquisition by Israel of a nuclear weapons capability on the United States and Free World security posture and deployments.
- b. Determine actions which should be taken by the United States relative to this capability.

##### II. Basic Assumption

2. There will be no arms control or nuclear weapons control measure established between the present time and the time when Israel could acquire a nuclear capability.

##### III. Technical Considerations Bearing on This Problem

3. Recent information confirms that Israel is engaged in construction of a 26 MW heavy water reactor and supporting facilities in the Negev at Dimona. Israeli officials state that the Dimona installation is to be a national laboratory for atomic research with the primary mission of achieving experience for the future construction of nuclear power stations. [4-1/2 lines of source text not declassified] The Dimona site will provide the Israelis with the necessary experience to develop plutonium production capability beginning with the processing of ore and proceeding through the separation of plutonium.
4. Extensive evidence exists that France has supplied plans, materials, equipment, and technical assistance to the Israelis, and is also training Israeli personnel. It is suspected that France will furnish ore probably under safeguards, in addition to the 85 tons which were reported to have been shipped from France to Israel. Israel has no large scale native source of uranium ore, and they have attempted to purchase ore from sources not requiring safeguard provisions. It is reported that an attempt is being made to purchase ore from Argentina. The Israelis have obtained assistance from Norway, including 20 tons of heavy water.
5. [7-1/2 lines of source text not declassified]
6. The United Arab Republic (UAR) has a nuclear research program in operation, based on Soviet UAR agreements concluded in 1956. The urge behind the UAR program of atomic research appears to spring from a desire for prestige within the Arab world. The two megawatt Soviet-supplied research reactor now being

completed poses no military threat. Since the disclosure of the Israeli reactor site at Dimona, UAR press statements have implied that future UAR development might be of a military nature. However, it does not at this time seem probable that the UAR will be in a position to build or to operate a large reactor either for power or for weapons production, without substantial assistance from foreign experts.

#### IV. Impact of the Acquisition of a Nuclear Capability by Israel

##### 7. General

a. The direct impact of Israel's acquisition of nuclear weapons will be felt in the Middle East, specifically the Arab World. The indirect impact will be felt by each of the major world powers; however, these nations will be affected because of their interests in the Middle East, not because of any direct Israeli military threat or military advantage on a global scale.

b. In other words, Israel's military power, with or without nuclear weapons, must be viewed in relation to the basic issue which dominates Israel's foreign policy, i.e., her existence in the Middle East in opposition to the Arab States. Behind this basic issue are deep-seated disputes which do not seem capable of early solution; such as the question of boundaries, Arab refugees, freedom of navigation in the Gulf of Aqaba, Jordan River water problem, and the use of the Suez Canal. In 1948 and again in 1956 these disputes resulted in armed conflict with Israel showing a military superiority over her Arab neighbors. The UAR has sought, and is receiving increased military aid from the USSR.

##### 8. Impact on Israel

a. It is not likely that Israel would use nuclear weapons to initiate a war in the Middle East, primarily due to the knowledge that such action would probably bring about severe international reactions, particularly from the United States and the USSR.

b. It may be expected, however, that Israel will use a nuclear capability as a powerful psychological weapon in an attempt to solve her basic problems with the Arab world. Israel may be expected to press its interests more vigorously and be less inclined to give concessions.

##### 9. Impact on the Arab World

a. The acquisition of an Israeli nuclear weapons capability would further aggravate the existing Israel-Arab tensions, and the Arab world may be expected to blame the United States as well as the French for Israeli accomplishments in this field and to condemn the actions as a further manifestation of Western imperialism. Of all the Arab Governments the UAR will feel the most threatened and will probably take the lead in seizing the initiative for the Arab World leadership.

b. Under UAR leadership, the Arabs may impose sanctions against French and possibly US and other Western interests in the area. The transit of the Suez Canal and access to the Middle East oil are two examples of US interests which may be jeopardized. The UAR could exploit this issue in order to achieve a degree of cooperation among the separate Arab States.

c. The USSR would almost certainly not provide nuclear weapons to the UAR, or assistance in developing a capability for the production of fissionable material.<sup>/2/</sup> However, the UAR would be expected to look to the USSR for compensating military aid and political support. It is almost certain that the USSR would accuse the United States of complicity with France in the nuclear arming of Israel and would cite this as new proof of the Colonialist and anti-Arab character of Western policy.

<sup>/2/</sup>SNIE 100-8-60, paragraph 1C. [Footnote in the source text. SNIE 100-8-60, "Implications of the Acquisition by Israel of a Nuclear Weapons Capability", December 9, 1960, is not printed.]

##### 10. Impact on the Soviet Bloc

a. The USSR will vigorously agitate the issue of a prospective Israeli nuclear capability. It may, for example, increase pressures on the United States and the United Kingdom for an agreement banning nuclear tests or even adopting broader prohibitions in the nuclear weapons field.

On the other hand, to justify a possible USSR desire to merge the test ban issue with the over-all disarmament problem, they may use the Israel nuclear potential as a pretext for discounting the test ban talks. The USSR will probably re-emphasize a former appeal for a nuclear free zone in the Middle East, to include Turkey. It will further exploit the matter to build up neutralist and Western support for its current proposals on general and complete disarmament./3/

/3/SNIE 100-8-60, paragraph 15. [Footnote in the source text.]

b. Apart from such manipulations, the Soviets will, in fact, be anxious to head off Israeli acquisition of nuclear weapons. They are opposed to the spread of nuclear weapons. In addition, they recognize that this development will increase pressures from Communist China for Soviet assistance in achieving nuclear capability, and produce demands from the UAR along the same lines. On this account, it is possible that the Soviets would be led to make concessions in their negotiating position on nuclear testing; they would doubtless also calculate that the United States and the United Kingdom would themselves be under pressure to make concessions. In any event, they will probably make diplomatic approaches to the United States, designed to generate US pressure upon France and Israel./4/

/4/SNIE 100-8-60, paragraph 16. [Footnote in the source text.]

#### 11. *Impact on the Free World*

a. Knowledge that Israel is well on the way to becoming a nuclear power is likely to bring greatly increased pressure in the West to check the spread of nuclear armaments. This pressure may be particularly strong from the smaller NATO countries and the neutral nations.

b. However, if Israel develops a demonstrable nuclear weapons capability, certain inhibitions against such development might disappear from small countries whose advanced industrial capacity could support such a development. Sweden, Switzerland and possibly Japan are examples.

c. The reaction of the emerging African nations will be particularly complicated. Disclosure of covert French support to Israel in this enterprise is likely to result in a wave of criticism of France, with such nations as the UAR, Guinea, Mali and Ghana advancing the concept of peaceful African solidarity. On the other hand, Israel's nuclear achievements may enhance its prestige among those African nations that have looked to Israel for technical assistance.

#### 12. *Specific Impact on the United States*

**a. The acquisition of a nuclear capability by Israel would not present a direct military threat against the United States or any US alliance. This acquisition would, however, have a definite and serious impact on US policies toward the Middle East and possibly toward France.**

b. Further, this acquisition might tend to complicate any negotiations for a nuclear test ban agreement or other arms control measures, which might be in progress at the time.

c. Specifically, it is to the advantage of the United States to:

(1) Prevent armed conflict among Middle East nations.

(2) Decrease tensions in the Middle East so that solution of basic problems can be attempted through peaceful means.

d. Acquisition of a nuclear weapons capability by either Israel or a nation of the Arab world would thus impede progress toward these US objectives. Moreover, if France, as the catalyst in this development, should attain strong influence over Israeli policy, differences between the US and French views within NATO, might be projected into the Middle East.

### V. United States Actions Required To Counteract an Israeli Nuclear Capability

13. The United States should initiate the following courses of action toward the Middle East:

- a. Attempt by all feasible means, official, quasi-official and private, to convince Israel and France that the acquisition of a nuclear weapons capability by Israel would be against the best interests of the Free World, the Middle East and of Israel.
- b. Pursue this same policy toward the acquisition of a nuclear weapons capability by the Arab world, particularly the UAR.
- c. Attempt by all feasible means to convince Israel that it will be to her greatest benefit to use all available talent and material now assigned to the nuclear program on peaceful nuclear projects that will benefit Israel most in economic-political affairs.
- d. Maintain the capability to deploy sufficient force to the Middle East-Mediterranean-North Africa area to persuade both Israel and the Arab nations against the use of force to settle their intra-Middle East problems.
- e. Take the initiative, by using all available political and economic means, while maintaining a creditable US military capability, to resolve the sources of tension in the Middle East.
- f. *[4 lines of source text not declassified]*
- g. Prepare for the psychological impact on the Middle East and Africa of a nuclear weapons detonation by Israel. The objective should be to prevent Sino-Soviet orientation of the nations of these areas because of this development.

**96. Editorial Note**

On August 9, 1961, Acting Assistant Secretary of State for Near Eastern and South Asian Affairs Meyer sent the following telegram to Secretary Rusk, who was then in Paris attending a NATO Foreign Ministers conference:

"Dept continues to believe PCC-sponsored fact-finding mission to Near East capitals very desirable primarily to improve our posture when Arab refugee problem comes before UNGA this fall. In view shortage time we see no hope for securing services of a neutral Special Representative. Among Americans we consider Joseph Esrey Johnson of Carnegie Endowment for International Peace particularly well qualified. Before approaching him we would appreciate your concurrence and your permission to indicate to him your personal interest in his accepting this assignment. We have in mind a low-key two or three week visit by Special Representative to Near Eastern capitals and a report upon which constructive PCC proposals can be made to forthcoming UNGA." (Tosec 35; Department of State, Central Files, 325.84/8-961)

Rusk approved in principle having a personal message sent to Joseph Johnson. (Memorandum from Swank to Meyer, August 11; *ibid.*, NEA/NE Files: Lot 70 D 229, Refugees, PCC) On August 12, upon Rusk's return to Washington, Meyer sent a memorandum to the Secretary requesting that he telephone his personal friend Joseph Johnson to discuss the assignment. (*Ibid.*) On August 17, Rusk met with Johnson to express his personal appreciation for Johnson's accepting the assignment. (Memorandum of conversation; *ibid.*, Central Files, 325.84/8-1761)

Also on August 17, in circular telegram 277, the Department of State informed Near Eastern and selected European posts that Johnson had agreed to accept the assignment as PCC Special Representative and that PCC concurrence was being sought. The Department contemplated that Johnson would "take low key soundings at Foreign Minister level" tentatively beginning in Cairo about August 24, with subsequent visits to Beirut, Amman, and Tel Aviv. (*Ibid.*) The United Nations announced Johnson's appointment as the Special Representative of the U.N. Conciliation Commission for Palestine on August 24. (Airgram to Amman and other posts, August 31; *ibid.*, 325.84/8-3161)