

November 1, 1978

**'UK Approach to Supplier Governments on Pakistan,'
State Department cable 278247 to US Embassy
Bonn et al.**

Citation:

"'UK Approach to Supplier Governments on Pakistan,' State Department cable 278247 to US Embassy Bonn et al.", November 1, 1978, Wilson Center Digital Archive, Mandatory Declassification Review request. Obtained and contributed by William Burr and included in NPIHP Research Update #3.

<https://wilson-center-digital-archive.dvincitest.com/document/112846>

Summary:

Summary of a British report on problems with the export "trigger list" of the Nuclear Suppliers Group. The list did not include gray area items that could be used in building nuclear facilities. To begin correcting the problem, the British announced a ban of inverter exports and asked other governments to take parallel steps. Also includes a summary of a secret British paper on Pakistan nuclear intentions. The British believed that the "piecemeal" Pakistani purchasing efforts to acquire inverters were directly related to the building of a gas centrifuge unit for producing weapons-grade uranium. Attached to the cable is a 7 November "Memorandum for the Record" discussing sharing this information with the Department of Energy.

Credits:

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English

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Original Scan

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APPROVED BY:PM/NPP:MMHUMPHREYS
T/O - DR NYE/S/S-O:TREYNDERS
OES/NET - MR DEMING
NEA/PAB - MS COON
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TAGS: PARM, MNUC, ENRG, TECH, UK

SUBJECT: UK APPROACH TO SUPPLIER GOVERNMENTS ON PAKISTAN

1. UK EMBUFF CALLED ON DEPARTMENT (PM) OCTOBER 27 TO PRESENT PAPERS ON PAKISTANI NUCLEAR ACTIVITIES AT PARAS 2 AND 3. UK IS ALSO MAKING THIS DEMARCHE IN ACTION ADDRESSEES CAPITALS. IF SUBJECT IS RAISED BY HOST AUTHORITIES, ACTION ADDRESSEES MAY NOTE THAT US HAS BEEN APPROACHED BY UK AND SHARES COMPLETELY UK CONCERNS. WE WILL BE TAKING ALL APPROPRIATE STEPS TO ENSURE THAT NO US EXPORTS CONTRIBUTE TO A PAKISTANI ENRICHMENT EFFORT.

ACTION ADDRESSEES (EXCEPT CANBERRA AND STOCKHOLM) SHOULD ALSO BE AWARE THAT WE WILL SOON BE TRANSMITTING A SIMILAR DEMARCHE ON PAKISTANI EFFORTS TO OBTAIN FOREIGN ASSISTANCE IN ATTAINING A CAPABILITY IN NUCLEAR FUEL REPROCESSING AND PLUTONIUM RECOVERY. WE WOULD WELCOME ANY REACTIONS

HOST GOVERNMENTS MAY BE IN A POSITION TO CONVEY REGARDING THE UK DEMARCHE.

2. FOLLOWING IS TEXT OF BRITISH "CONFIDENTIAL" PAPER ON PAKS EFFORTS TO ACQUIRE INVERTERS FOR USE IN AN ENRICHMENT PLANT:

BEGIN TEXT:

A. EVER SINCE THE NUCLEAR SUPPLIERS GROUP (NSG) DREW UP AN EXPORT TRIGGER LIST IN 1975 WHICH INCLUDED READILY IDENTIFIABLE COMPONENTS OF NUCLEAR PLANTS, WE AND OTHER NSG MEMBERS HAVE BEEN AWARE THAT A GREAT MANY OTHER FAIRLY

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STANDARD INDUSTRIAL AND SCIENTIFIC ITEMS, THE SO-CALLED "GREY AREAS", COULD ALSO BE USED IN NUCLEAR PLANTS. SUCH ITEMS WERE NOT, HOWEVER, INCLUDED IN THE TRIGGER LIST BECAUSE THEY WERE INDIVIDUALLY OF LESS IMPORTANCE AND WERE NOT SOLELY FOR NUCLEAR USE. SINCE SUCH ITEMS ARE NOT SPECIFICALLY INCLUDED IN THE TRIGGER LIST MOST NSG MEMBERS, INCLUDING THE UK, HAVE TENDED NOT TO INCLUDE THEM IN EXPORT CONTROL LEGISLATION.

B. AS A DEPOSITORY STATE OF THE NON-PROLIFERATION TREATY AND AS A MEMBER OF THE NSG, THE UK IS PARTICULARLY CONCERNED TO ENSURE THAT OPPORTUNITIES FOR PROLIFERATION ARE AVOIDED WHEREEVER POSSIBLE. OUR CONCERN ABOUT UNCONTROLLED EQUIPMENT WHICH COULD BE USED IN REPROCESSING OR URANIUM ENRICHMENT PLANTS HAD LED US TO RECONSIDER THE ISSUE OF THE "GREY AREA" WITH A VIEW TO COMPILING A LIST OF THE MORE SIGNIFICANT ITEMS WHICH SHOULD PERHAPS BE MADE SUBJECT TO EXPORT CONTROL. WE WOULD BE INTERESTED TO LEARN HOW OTHER NSG MEMBERS VIEW THIS PROBLEM AND WHAT, IF ANY, STEPS THEY ARE TAKING TO DEAL WITH IT.

C. FROM OUR KNOWLEDGE AS CONSTRUCTOR AND OPERATOR OF A CENTRIFUGE ENRICHMENT PLANT WE HAVE RECENTLY BECOME AWARE OF A POTENTIALLY SERIOUS LOOPHOLE IN OUR EXPORT CONTROLS CONCERNING INVERTERS (FREQUENCY CHANGERS) OF A SPECIFICATION WHICH COULD BE USED IN A GAS CENTRIFUGE ENRICHMENT PLANT CAPABLE OF PRODUCING WEAPONS-GRADE (HIGHLY ENRICHED) URANIUM. THE GOVERNMENT HAVE ACCORDINGLY DECIDED TO AMEND THE EXPORT OF SUCH INVERTERS. THE AMENDMENT COMES INTO EFFECT ON 9 NOVEMBER 1978: AN ANNOUNCEMENT WAS MADE IN THE DEPARTMENT OF TRADE JOURNAL ON 19 OCTOBER. WE HAVE SOUGHT A DEFINITION WHICH WILL CATCH ALL SUCH ITEMS WHICH MIGHT BE USED IN A CENTRIFUGE PLANT, BUT AS LITTLE ELSE AS POSSIBLE. WE RECOGNIZE THAT THIS WILL MEAN SUBJECTING TO CONTROL SOME ITEMS WITH PERFECTLY INNOCENT USES. THE TERM FREQUENCY CHANGER AS DEFINED IN THE AMENDING ORDER.

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COVERS ALL ITEMS WITH A MULTI-PHASE ELECTRICAL POWER OUTPUT WITHIN THE RANGE 600 TO 2000 HERTZ; SUCH EQUIPMENT IS ALSO KNOWN BY THE TERMS "INVERTER", "CONVERTER", "GENERATOR", OR "AMPLIFIER".

D. A CONTRACT FROM PAKISTAN PLACED WITH A BRITISH FIRM THROUGH AN INTERMEDIARY IS THE FIRST TO BE AFFECTED BY THE NEW PROVISION. IT IS FOR 100 HIGH FREQUENCY INVERTERS.

E. WE URGE OTHER POTENTIAL SUPPLIER GOVERNMENTS TO TAKE PARALLEL STEPS TO ENSURE THAT ITEMS OF THIS KIND ARE CONTROLLED AND THAT THE PAKISTAN GOVERNMENT IS NOT ABLE TO OBTAIN ELSEWHERE WHAT WE ARE BRINGING UNDER CONTROL. WE ARE WELL AWARE THAT PAKISTAN MAY QUITE RAPIDLY BE ABLE TO DEVELOP A CAPABILITY OF HER OWN AND INDEED HAS ALREADY OBTAINED SOME ITEMS FROM ABROAD. THERE ARE LIKELY TO BE PROBLEMS IN PARTICULAR WITH CONTROLLING THE EXPORT OF INDIVIDUALLY NON-SENSITIVE COMPONENT PARTS AND ATTEMPTS MAY BE MADE TO OBTAIN ITEMS THROUGH THIRD COUNTRIES. WE FEEL NONETHELESS THAT EVEN TO SLOW DOWN A WEAPONS DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME IS WELL WORTHWHILE IN NON-PROLIFERATION TERMS. WE ARE CONFIDENT THAT IN PURSUIT OF SHARED NON-PROLIFERATION AIMS, AS WELL AS OUR COMMON NSG INTEREST IN KEEPING COMMERCIAL AND NON-PROLIFERATION CONSIDERATIONS APART, OTHER GOVERNMENTS WILL WISH TO SUPPORT US IN THIS.

F. AGAINST THIS BACKGROUND, WE URGE GOVERNMENTS TO TAKE STEPS WHICH WOULD PUT THEM IN A POSITION

(1) TO KNOW IF A FIRM HAS AN EXPORT ORDER FOR INVERTERS OF THE RELEVANT SPECIFICATIONS:

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- (2) TO REQUIRE AN EXPORT LICENSE FOR SUCH EQUIPMENT;
- (3) WHERE APPROPRIATE TO REFUSE A LICENSE UPON APPLICATION.

END TEXT.

3. FOLLOWING IS TEXT OF BRITISH "SECRET" PAPER ON PAKISTAN NUCLEAR INTENTION, WHICH MAY NOT HAVE BEEN SHARED WITH ALL ACTION ADDRESSEE HOST GOVERNMENTS AND ACCORDINGLY SHOULD NOT BE REFERRED TO BY POSTS UNLESS RAISED BY HOST AUTHORITIES.

BEGIN TEXT

- A. FOLLOWING IS OUR ASSESSMENT OF PAKISTAN'S INTENTIONS
- B. THERE IS INFORMATION WHICH INDICATES THAT PAKISTAN IS PURSUING A NUCLEAR WEAPONS DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME. THIS INCLUDES RECENT EVIDENCE THAT PAKISTAN INTENDS TO CONSTRUCT A URANIUM ENRICHMENT PLANT AND MAY HAVE ALREADY BEGUN TO DO SO.
- C. PAKISTANI ORGANIZATIONS (WHICH ARE BELIEVED TO BE CONNECTED WITH THEIR NUCLEAR WEAPONS DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME) HAVE ORDERED ON A PIECEMEAL BASIS FROM FOREIGN SUPPLIERS COMPONENTS AND EQUIPMENT, INCLUDING INVERTERS OF CERTAIN SPECIFICATIONS, WHICH ARE LIKELY TO BE USED TO BUILD OR OPERATE A GAS CENTRIFUGE PLANT CAPABLE OF ENRICHING URANIUM TO WEAPON-GRADE LEVELS. THIS DEMONSTRATES THE PROBABILITY OF PAKISTAN'S COVERT ASSEMBLY OF A PLANT OF FISSILE MATERIAL, WHICH WILL NOT BE SUBJECT TO INTERNATIONAL SAFEGUARDS. PAKISTAN HAS ITS OWN RESOURCES OF URANIUM, WHICH ARE NOT SUBJECT TO SAFEGUARDS AND WHICH COULD AFTER CONVERSION BE ENRICHED IN SUCH A PLANT.

END TEXT

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4. FOR ROME: NYE, PICKERING, VAN DOREN AND HUMPHREYS
WILL WISH TO DISCUSS SUBSTANCE OF BRITISH APPROACH WITH
APPROPRIATE GOI OFFICIALS.
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Mel Christopher informed 11/7/78.

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MEMORANDUM FOR THE RECORD

Per conversation with the Operations Center (the Director's Office, I presume William Rope, but I regrettably did not get the name), ACDA authorized to show visiting DOE official a copy of State 278247, which is Nodis, dated November 1, 1978.

I initially requested that a copy be sent to DOE. The Operations Center was not comfortable with this, did not want copies of this floating around, at which point I offered an alternative which had been proposed to me by Thomas W. Graham (NP/NX). I suggested that the DOE person might read the telegram in question in ACDA's Front Office. I was told by the Operations Center that this would be preferable to sending DOE a copy. I requested and was granted permission to do this.

I indicated to Rope that I felt State would prefer sending DOE a copy so that they could maintain a record of who had access to the information. ACDA could maintain informal records, but I presumed that they would want complete formal records. He indicated that this was not necessary and that the approach I had suggested would be preferred.

All of the foregoing transpired during a telephone conversation.



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Addendum

The name of the DOE official who is to see the cable in question is Jerimiah Kratz. He is in DOE/ISA (per T.W.Graham).

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