

**August 26, 1977**

**Cable, South African Department of Foreign Affairs,  
'South Africa: Nuclear Bomb Charges'**

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**Summary:**

South African department of Foreign Affairs cable to its embassies addressing the Soviet charge that South Africa is on the precipice of developing a nuclear bomb. The message states that South Africa has no intentions of developing a weapon, that the Kalahari facility is not being used to test explosives, and that "there will not be any nuclear explosive testing of any kind in South Africa." Attached is a copy of the Prime Ministers' 24 August 1977 speech in Cape Town.

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CONFIDENTIAL

TO ALL HEADS OF MISSION

SOUTH AFRICA: NUCLEAR BOMB CHARGES

As you are aware the Soviet Union has recently alleged that South Africa is on the point of exploding its first atom bomb. This allegation has since received wide coverage in the world press and the governments of the U.S.A., France, United Kingdom and West-Germany then issued statements in which they warned South Africa not to proceed with any such plans.

For your confidential background information I wish to inform you that we have formally advised the United States, French and British Ambassadors as well as German Foreign Minister during our own Minister's recent visit abroad that:

- a) South Africa does not have or intend to develop a nuclear explosive device for any purpose, peaceful or otherwise;
- b) The so-called Kalahari facility is not a testing facility for nuclear explosions;
- c) There will not be any nuclear explosive testing of any kind in South Africa.

For your further information I attach an extract from the text of the speech delivered by The Honourable the Prime Minister in Cape Town on 24 August 1977 regarding this matter.

*J. S. Brown*

SECRETARY FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS

*Mr. [unclear]  
[unclear]  
24/8.*

EXTRACT FROM THE HONOURABLE THE PRIME MINISTER'S SPEECH IN CAPE  
TOWN ON 24 AUGUST 1977

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..... dit is dan ook die rede waarom dat daar drukgroepe in Suid-Afrika bestaan, dit is die rede waarom dat daar van buite soveel druk op Suid-Afrika uitgeoefen word en kwalik het hulle die een ekskuus gekry om druk op Suid-Afrika uit te oefen of hulle is alweer besig met die tweede en die derde en die vierde rede waarom dat daar fout met Suid-Afrika te vinde moet wees. U het gesien in die afgelope paar dae het hulle 'n ander rede gevind, 'n rede wat skielik ontdek is deur die Russe, naamlik dat Suid-Afrika op die punt staan om 'n kernbom te ontplof. U sal vir u herinner dat toe ek dit 'n paar jaar gelede namens die Regering wêreldkundig gemaak het dat ons wetenskaplikes uraan kan verryk en dat hulle op die mees denkbare vernuftige wyse 'n eie proses ontwikkel het om dit te doen, toe het die wêreld ons uitgelag en toe ons aangebied het om vreedsaam en vir vreedsame doeleindes saam te werk met alle nasies is ons eenvoudig geïgnoreer en in Junie van hierdie jaar, ten spyte van die feit dat ons 'n stigterslid was, is ons uitgeskop uit die komitee wat met hierdie aangeleenthede handel en Egipte is in ons plek geplaas en as verskoning is aangevoer dat ons te agterlik is op die kerngebied. Nou moet hierdie agterlike nasie op hierdie gebied voor die vierškaar gebring word omdat hy dan nou skielik 'n kernbom sal wil laat ontplof. Ek het gisteraand gesê ek glimlag as ek aan al hierdie dinge dink, ek het lus om hardop te lag hoe meer ek daarvan lees.

Now, ladies and gentlemen, it is well-known when I speak about this subject that I as Prime Minister and other Ministers as well as the President of the South African Atomic Energy Board have on frequent occasions stated and re-affirmed the South African Government's support for the ideal that nuclear energy be used solely for peaceful purposes. As a practical manifestation of our policy in support of non-proliferation, South Africa has participated actively in setting up the safeguards system of the International Atomic Energy Agency. Furthermore, South Africa has voluntarily undertaken to supply its uranium to non-nuclear weapon states only under Agency or equivalent safeguards. Indeed, South Africa has,

throughout, scrupulously honoured all its obligations under the Statute of the Agency. There is ample evidence of the constructive role South Africa has played in this field in the Agency from its very founding days. Therefore, although South Africa has not acceded to the Non-Proliferation Treaty (N.P.T.), that does not mean that we have not co-operated in achieving the object of preventing proliferation. Indeed all the evidence show that we have in fact co-operated to prevent proliferation.

South Africa's offer to place its large-scale commercial enrichment plant which is to be erected in South Africa, unilaterally, under Agency safeguards, was taken a step further in August 1976 when the President of the South African Atomic Energy Board asked the Director-General of the Agency to provide a proposed draft for such an agreement. A design information questionnaire was received in October 1976, followed by a draft safeguards agreement at the end of February 1977. Since then the President of the South African Atomic Energy Board has had discussions on this matter with the Inspector-General of the International Atomic Energy Agency and during these discussions in Salzburg the President pointed out that the Uranium Enrichment Corporation of South Africa had in fact completed the questionnaire assuming a hypothetical capacity for the commercial enrichment plant. He indicated, however, that, as announced before, the South African Government would only decide on the size of the plant in 1978 and pointed out that if the size differed substantially from the one that had been assumed in filling in the questionnaire, the answers would not be applicable at all. In these circumstances it was agreed that it would be better to wait until the South African Government had taken a firm decision on the size of the commercial plant before completion of the questionnaire and its submission to the Agency. These facts are well-known.

Furthermore, South Africa has on various occasions in the past given consideration to accession to the Non-Proliferation Treaty. In this process South Africa must naturally bear in mind the obligations undertaken by the other parties, on a bilateral as well as a multi-lateral basis in this field. For instance, in terms of Article IV(2) of the Non-Proliferation Treaty, all parties undertake

to facilitate the fullest possible exchange of equipment, materials and scientific and technological information for the peaceful uses of nuclear energy. Arising from bilateral agreements there have been specific commitments in regard to the supply of materials and equipment subject to Agency safeguards, but it has been South Africa's experience in the recent past that these commitments have been totally ignored. Inevitably South Africa must, in considering accession to the Non-Proliferation Treaty, be influenced by the way in which the powers concerned live up to their commitments under bilateral agreement with South Africa as well as under Article IV(2) of the Non-Proliferation Treaty in general.

The International Atomic Energy Agency, which has a responsibility of ensuring that the obligations of the Non-Proliferation Treaty are carried out by the signatories, must inspire confidence with all the parties to the Treaty and only then can it fulfil its functions satisfactorily. Far from inspiring confidence, however, and contrary to its own Statute - it decided in June last to oust South Africa from the Board of Governors and to replace it by Egypt "as the most advanced country in Africa in the field of nuclear energy, including the production of nuclear raw material". So it was motivated. This, ladies and gentlemen, in spite of the fact that since the inception of the Agency, South Africa has been a member of the Board of Governors and in spite of its recognised position as a major producer of uranium, as well as its achievements in the field of nuclear research, including the development of a new enrichment process.

Furthermore, countries like the U.S.A. have not honoured the commitments they have entered into bilaterally. So, for example, the U.S.A. has not honoured the undertaking to supply fuel for the research reactor Safari I, which is under full International Atomic Energy Agency safeguards, in spite of the undertaking South Africa has given and honoured, that the burnt fuel elements will be returned to the U.S.A. for re-processing. No delivery has yet been made of fuel elements ordered from the U.S.A. two years ago, although the enriched uranium was paid for at the time that the order was placed. Up to now South Africa has not even received an indication whether an export permit for the elements will be issued.

As you know, South Africa has decided to build a nuclear power station at Koeberg. South Africa has entered into a contract with the United States Energy Research and Development Agency for the supply of the necessary fuel for the initial period. What guarantee do we have that this contract will be honoured and that the fuel will be delivered in time? - is the question I am entitled to put tonight.

We are still seriously considering accession to the Non-Proliferation Treaty and we would be prepared to discuss the matter with the United States, who last week urged us to do so, but naturally the discriminatory actions, including those to which I have referred, will be raised and will have to be sorted out at the same time (applause). In the envisaged discussions we would of course also ask for information on what steps the United States Government has taken to induce other countries to adhere to the N.P.T. According to the latest information at my disposal it is interesting to note that apart from other countries which have not done so no less than 13 of the 34 members of the Board of Governors of the International Atomic Energy Agency have either not ratified or acceded to the N.P.T. These 13 countries are:

Argentina, Bangladesh, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Egypt, France (may I pause here for a moment and say "et tu Brute"), India, Indonesia, Niger, Pakistan, Panama and Portugal.

I ask you in all seriousness, ladies and gentlemen, I ask the world by what rights are they pressurising South Africa - why this blatant discrimination against South Africa when there are so many other countries and even 13 who are sitting on the Board itself, why must South Africa again be singled out?

The U.S.A., the Soviet Union and the United Kingdom are parties to the Treaty but they have fully protected their positions as nuclear weapon states with large nuclear arsenals. Indeed at this time when the Soviet Union is accusing South Africa of preparing a nuclear explosion, reports indicate that the Soviet Union herself has set off a further explosion in its current series. Such, ladies and gentlemen, are the double standards to which South Africa is subjected to in this world. And I say so in all seriousness, as a matter of fact I say so in all humility: If these things continue

and don't stop the time will arrive when South Africa will have no option, small as it is, to say to the world: So far and no further, do your damndest if you so wish (loud applause).

Ek wil nou graag vertrou, dames en here, dat die gekyf van die afgelope paar dae ten einde sal kom en dat daar besef sal word dat Jerusalem 'n baie skoon stad was, so het my moeder my geleer, omdat elke man voor sy eie deur gegee het. Suid-Afrika is moog om by herhaling versekerings te gee soos wat die afgelope tyd van hom gepra is.