

September 13, 1977

Memorandum from C.L.G. Mallaby of the UK Arms Control and Disarmament Department, 'South Africa and the Non-Proliferation Treat'

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Summary:

Mallaby outlines the UK position on South African accession to the Non-Proliferation Treaty.

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Private Secretary

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SOUTH AFRICA AND THE NON-PROLIFERATION TREATY

1. The US Ambassador is calling on the Secretary of State at 6.00 pm today, to speak on instructions about South Africa and the NPT. The likely content of the Ambassador's instructions was reported in Washington telno 3883.

LINE TO TAKE

2. I suggest that the Secretary of State should comment as follows on the points in the telegram:

(a) We agree to the American suggestion that HM Ambassador in Pretoria should support a US approach reiterating our earlier démarche urging South Africa to adhere very quickly to the NPT.

(b) We also agree to join in urging the South Africans meanwhile to accept international inspection of their uranium enrichment plant at Valindaba. We wonder, however, whether it is not premature to specify who might do the inspecting. It will be important for the arrangements to command the widest possible credibility internationally. One alternative might be to use the IAEA inspectors who already inspect the Safari I research reactor supplied to South Africa by the USA.

(c) We also see advantage in an American approach to the Nigerians to persuade them against attempting to exclude South Africa altogether from the IAEA. But we see no chance of securing - and no point in lobbying for - Nigerian support for reinstating South Africa on the IAEA Board of Governors.

Have the Americans considered pointing out to the Russians that South African expulsion from the IAEA would prejudice efforts to secure South African adherence to the NPT and acceptance of international safeguards on all their nuclear establishments?

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/(e) It seems

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- (e) It seems possible that the South Africans will respond to our renewed démarche by raising again with the Americans, and perhaps us, the question of nuclear exports to them as a quid pro quo for adherence to the NPT. We should keep in close touch.
- (f) We should be interested to know the latest American assessment of the nature of the South African facility in the Kalahari Desert.

BACKGROUND

3. Following Soviet allegations that the South Africans were completing work on the production of nuclear weapons and preparing a test explosion, the UK, US and France made strong representations in August to the South African Government. The UK and US urged them to adhere to the NPT as the best way of allaying widespread international anxiety.
4. The South African Government have told the Americans that they would be prepared to enter into early discussions on immediate adherence to the NPT on the understanding that they could raise certain connected matters, including "apparent discrimination" against South Africa in the supply of fuel elements for peaceful nuclear reactors and also South African ejection from their seat on the IAEA Board of Governors. FCO Departments are preparing recommendations about what we could say on future British nuclear exports if the South Africans raise the matter with us.
5. Production has only recently started at the South African uranium enrichment plant at Valindaba. Since the plant was constructed by the South Africans themselves, no foreign supplier has been in a position to insist that IAEA safeguards be applied to it. We believe that the plant was designed to produce low enriched uranium for power reactors. But it could be adapted to the production of highly enriched uranium for use in nuclear explosives.
6. The US idea of inspection of Valindaba by American, British, French and FRG nationals seems questionable because:-

/(a) Black African

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- (a) Black African opinion, perhaps encouraged by the Russians, could accuse the Western inspectors of collusion in South African plans for a nuclear weapons capability.
- (b) HMG would be accepting a share of responsibility which could be very embarrassing if doubts later re-emerged about whether South Africa was preparing to create a nuclear weapons capability.

7. On the Kalahari facility, which triggered the recent Soviet allegations about a possible South African nuclear capability, the Americans told us recently that they did not intend at present to press the South Africans to state the purpose of the facility. But the Prime Minister has commented that we should take a suitable opportunity for establishing its purpose. The Americans are best placed to form an authoritative view.

8. CSAD, ES & SD and WAD concur.

C L G Mallaby

C L G Mallaby
Arms Control & Disarmament
Department

13 September 1977

- cc PS/Lord Goronwy-Roberts
- PS/PUS
- Mr Graham
- Mr Moberly
- Mr Edmonds
- ES & SD
- CSAD
- WAD
- EESD

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