

September 30, 1977

**Draft letter and Aide Memoire from South African
Foreign Minister R.F. Botha to US Secretary of State
Cyrus Vance**

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Summary:

South African Foreign Minister R.F. Botha writes to the US Secretary of State disputing accusations that South Africa is developing nuclear weapons.

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SEKRETARIS.

ATOOMKRAAG: ANTWOORD AAN V.S.A.

Bygaande is 'n konsep antwoord aan Vance en 'n konsep Aide Memoire.

Laasgenoemde is so opgestel dat dit verskillende onderwerpe of fasette van die saak op aparte bladsye behandel.

Sekere bladsye kan dus weggelaat word as u dit so wil hê.


J.S.F. BOTHA.

PRETORIA,

30 September 1977.

Dear _____

I thank you for your letter of 15 September which Ambassador Bowdler has given me together with the Aide Memoire which was handed to Ambassador Sole on the same day.

I welcome the opportunity to respond to your approach on the question of South Africa's nuclear policy and I have explained our position to Ambassador Bowdler along the lines of the enclosed Aide Memoire.

We too are concerned about the effect of the Soviet allegations, but I must be frank with you when I say that we are even more concerned about the persistent statements of official United States spokesmen which question South Africa's good faith and tend to reinforce Soviet allegations, despite my Prime Minister's very explicit assurances.

After all, the present hue and cry is clearly a Soviet propaganda exercise. There is no substance to it and whatever success this Soviet propaganda may have had South Africa cannot allow its actions to be dictated by such manoeuvres.

As you will note we continue to be prepared to discuss all aspects of South Africa's nuclear policy with you - including the possibility of acceding to the Non-Proliferation Treaty.

R.F. BOTHA
MINISTER FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS.

DRAFT RESPONSE TO UNITED STATES NOTE
OF 15 SEPTEMBER.

In response to the approach by the United States last August in connection with the Soviet allegations that South Africa was about to explode a nuclear device, the South African Prime Minister formally advised the United States Government that South Africa does not have, or intend to develop, a nuclear explosive device for any purpose, peaceful or otherwise; that the so-called Kalahari facility is not a testing facility for nuclear explosions; and that there will not be any nuclear explosive testing of any kind in South Africa.

It was also explained to the United States that the so-called Kalahari facility has no relevance to South Africa's nuclear programme. There can thus be no question of abandoning it.

Persistent allusion to this matter by United States spokesmen, despite the Prime Minister's assurance, do not serve to allay South Africa's own fears that suspicions created by the Soviet allegations are being exploited.

The U.S.A. describes the Prime Minister's assurances as a "good beginning". But the Prime Minister has on many occasions affirmed South Africa's commitment to the peaceful uses of the atom. There is, as the United States must surely be aware, ample evidence of South Africa's good faith in its adherence to a policy devoted exclusively to the peaceful uses of the atom.

2.

South Africa has a Co-operation Agreement with the USA, and South Africa and the USA are also parties to a trilateral agreement with the IAEA relating to safeguards and inspection. In these agreements South Africa undertook certain commitments which have at all times been scrupulously met to the satisfaction of the Agency inspectors. At no time prior to the recent Soviet allegations has the United States authorities conveyed to the South African Government its dissatisfaction or even its doubts about the manner in which South Africa has discharged its responsibilities. South Africa therefore cannot accept from responsible quarters attempts to raise doubts about its integrity in this regard and it regrets that the United States by its highly publicised overreaction has given unwarranted credence to the Soviet allegations on this occasion.

3.

South Africa's uranium enrichment programme continues to be focussed solely on peaceful uses and the Government's decision to proceed with this programme was based on two overriding considerations - its economic advantages to South Africa and the assurance of access to enriched uranium.

It has long been South African policy to beneficiate as far as possible its abundant raw materials for export. As a major producer of uranium it is only natural that South Africa would also wish to beneficiate this product for supply to foreign clients. The economic advantages to South Africa would be considerable.

The second consideration, assurance of access to enriched fuel for its power programme has taken on even greater importance in the light of the demonstrated unreliability of foreign sources.

These are the two major considerations of the South African Government in its approach to accession to the NPT.

There are other considerations, such as safeguarding of the South African process against industrial espionage, but these present difficulties of a different order.

4.

While the South African Government remains committed to the ideal of a world entirely free of nuclear weapons, this is not the only issue at stake in accession to the NPT. There are other implications of the Treaty which the South African Government must take into account for its vital interests would be affected if the NPT were not scrupulously met by all parties thereto.

In this context Article IV(2) of the Treaty is of crucial importance. In terms of this article parties to the Treaty undertake to facilitate the fullest possible exchange of equipment, materials and scientific and technological information for the peaceful uses of nuclear energy. It is, however, already clear that many parties to the Treaty feel that this undertaking is not being honoured. South Africa has taken particular note of this for she has been the frequent victim of arbitrary breaches of rules and commitments flowing from international treaties and agreements.

5. 4.

When the Prime Minister spoke on the 24th August he said, inter alia: "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. 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."

The South African Government ~~is~~ therefore ^{remains} prepared to enter into ~~discussions~~ discussions with the United States on all aspects of South Africa's nuclear policy including the question of accession to the Non-Proliferation Treaty.

SECRETARY.

ATOMIC ENERGY: ANSWER TO US.

Included, a draft reply to Vance and a draft Aide Memoire.

The latter was accordingly prepared to deal with different topics or aspects of the case in separate pages.

Some pages can therefore be deleted if you prefer.

J.S.F. BOTHA

PRETORIA,

30 SEPTEMBER 1977.

[Document continues in English]