

September 19, 1977

**Telegram from South African Embassy in
Washington to the Department of Foreign Affairs
Summarizing a Washington Star Newspaper Article
on 'South Africa and the Bomb'**

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Summary:

Summary of Washington Star newspaper article on Carter administration concerns that South Africa was developing nuclear weapons.

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TO SECEXTERN FRETORIA
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FOLLOWING ARE EXTRACTS FROM ARTICLE BY STAFF WRITER HENRY S. LBRADSHER ON "SOUTH AFRICA AND THE BOMB" PUBLISHED IN THIS AFTERNOON'S WASHINGTON STAR:

"ALMOST FOUR WEEKS AFTER PRESIDENT CARTER SAID SOUTH AFRICA HAD ASSURED HIM THAT IT WILL NOT CONDUCT A NUCLEAR TEST, THE U.S. GOVERNMENT CONTINUES TO BE WORRIED ABOUT THE POSSIBILITY THAT ONE MIGHT OCCUR.

'THERE IS STILL ENOUGH STUFF IN THE DESERT' AT THE KALAHARI SITE WHERE SOUTH AFRICA WAS BELIEVED TO BE PREPARING FOR A NUCLEAR EXPLOSION 'TO CAUSE US CONCERN,' ONE SENIOR AMERICAN OFFICIAL SAYS.

THE CARTER ADMINISTRATION IS KEEPING AN EYE ON THAT SITE, ALTHOUGH OFFICIALS DECLINE TO TALK ABOUT THE LATEST RESULTS OF SATELLITE RECONNAISSANCE OF IT. IT IS KNOWN, HOWEVER, THAT SOUTH AFRICA HAS NOT DISMANTLED ANY OF THE FACILITIES IN THE DESERT WHICH SEEMED TO HAVE BEEN BUILT FOR A NUCLEAR TEST.

THE ADMINISTRATION ALSO HAS UNDER WAY DISCUSSIONS WITH OTHER COUNTRIES ON STEPS TO RESTRICT THE SUPPLY TO SOUTH AFRICA OF EQUIPMENT AND MATERIALS THAT MIGHT BE USED FOR NUCLEAR WEAPONS PURPOSES.

THE ADMINISTRATION HAS SOUGHT TO KEEP ITS CONTINUING EFFORTS IN A LOW KEY, HOWEVER, FOR FEAR OF ANTAGONIZING THE SOUTH AFRICAN GOVERNMENT AND MAKING MORE DIFFICULT A PERMANENT ELIMINATION OF THE NUCLEAR POSSIBILITY.

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THERE ALREADY HAS BEEN A STRONG REACTION IN SOUTH AFRICA TO THE INTERNATIONAL PRESSURE AGAINST TESTING A NUCLEAR DEVICE. ALTHOUGH PRIME MINISTER JOHN VORSTER'S GOVERNMENT INSISTS THAT IT HAS NO INTENTION OF CONDUCTING A NUCLEAR TEST, SOME POLITICIANS SUCH AS FINANCE MINISTER OWEN HORWOOD HAVE ARGUED FOR LEAVING THE DOOR OPEN TO A FUTURE EXPLOSION.

THE U.S. GOVERNMENT IS HOPING TO CLOSE THAT DOOR BY GETTING SOUTH AFRICA TO ACCEPT INTERNATIONAL SAFEGUARDS AND INSPECTIONS OF ITS NUCLEAR PROGRAM AND TO SIGN THE INTERNATIONAL TREATY AGAINST ADDITIONAL NATIONS' ACQUIRING NUCLEAR WEAPONS, THE SO-CALLED NON-PROLIFERATION TREATY.

EFFORTS TO CUT OFF EQUIPMENT AND MATERIAL FROM OTHER COUNTRIES ARE CONSIDERED ONLY A PARTIAL STEP TOWARD THOSE MORE DEFINITIVE DEVELOPMENTS. THE REASON IS THAT SOUTH AFRICA IS NOW BELIEVED TO HAVE THE SCIENTISTS AND THE INDUSTRIAL FACILITIES TO MAKE NUCLEAR WEAPONS ON ITS OWN.

BESIEGED BY BLACK PRESSURE IN SOUTHERN AFRICA, THE WHITE MINORITY GOVERNMENT IN PRETORIA IS PRESUMED TO BE INTERESTED IN NUCLEAR WEAPONS AS A LAST, DESPERATE ATTEMPT TO GUARANTEE THAT IT WILL NOT BE OVERWHELMED. BUT THE UNITED STATES AND OTHER WESTERN NATIONS VIEW A SOUTH AFRICA ACQUISITION OF NUCLEAR WEAPONS AS A DANGEROUS STEP TOWARD BREAKING THE 32-YEAR-OLD WORLDWIDE EFFORT TO AVOID ANY FURTHER UNLEASHING OF NUCLEAR DESTRUCTION.

THE SOVIET UNION IS ALSO INTERESTED IN CHECKING THE SPREAD OF NUCLEAR WEAPONS. THIS HAS BEEN ITS GENERAL POLICY, AND IN THIS CASE IT FITS INTO ITS ATTEMPT TO APPEAR A CHAMPION OF THE BLACK SELF-GOVERNMENT CAUSE IN AFRICA.''

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....."THERE IS SOME SUSPICION IN OFFICIAL WASHINGTON, HOWEVER, THAT THE SOVIET INFORMATION ORIGINATED IN OLD-FASHIONED SPY OPERATIONS AGAINST SOUTH AFRICA, WITH PHOTOS OF A TOWER, SHEDS AND AN APPARENT COMMAND POST IN THE DESERT ONLY CONFIRMING WHAT ESPIONAGE REPORTED. THE TASS STATEMENT SAID THAT 'SOME WESTERN STATES INCORPORATED INTO NATO AS WELL ASISRAEL' CONTRIBUTED TO SOUTH AFRICA'S MILITARY STRENGTH.

BUT U.S. OFFICIALS SAY THEY HAVE CONCLUDED, AFTER CAREFUL EXAMINATION OF THE POSSIBILITY, THAT ISRAEL DID NOT DIRECTLY CONTRIBUTE TO A SOUTH AFRICAN NUCLEAR DEVICE."

ARTICLE GIVES OTHER BACKGROUND INCLUDING TALKS ON 17 AUGUST, BETWEEN GERARD SMITH AND PRESIDENT GISCARD D'ESTAING; STATEMENT BY FRENCH FOREIGN MINISTER ON AUGUST 22 AND TEXTS OF STATEMENT BY CARTER ON AUGUST 23, WHEN HE INFORMED A NEWS CONFERENCE OF THE ASSURANCE RECEIVED FROM SOUTH AFRICA "IN RESPONSE TO OUR OWN DIRECT ENQUIRY".

ARTICLE CONCLUDES "ACCORDING TO ADMINISTRATION OFFICIALS, THE UNITED STATES DID MORE THAN INQUIRE. IT ALSO HINTED AT VARIOUS FORMS OF ECONOMIC PRESSURE AND EVEN A BREAK OF DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS IF SOUTH AFRICA WENT AHEAD."

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