

**December 7, 1979**

**Deputy Director for National Foreign Assessment,  
Central Intelligence Agency, Enclosing Report, 'A  
Review of the Evidence of Chinese Involvement in  
Pakistan's Nuclear Weapons Program'**

**Citation:**

"Deputy Director for National Foreign Assessment, Central Intelligence Agency, Enclosing Report, 'A Review of the Evidence of Chinese Involvement in Pakistan's Nuclear Weapons Program'", December 7, 1979, Wilson Center Digital Archive, Obtained and contributed by William Burr and included in NPIHP Research Update #11. <https://wilson-center-digital-archive.dvincitest.com/document/116891>

**Summary:**

With nuclear proliferation a policy priority for the Jimmy Carter administration, and Pakistan already a special concern, the possibility that China and Pakistan were sharing nuclear weapons-related information began was beginning to worry US government officials. They had no hard evidence--and the soft evidence that concerned them is massively excised in the December 1979 report just as Beijing and Washington were normalizing relations—so the “precise nature and extent of this cooperation is uncertain.”

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**Original Language:**

English

**Contents:**

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EO 13526 3.3(b)(1)>25Yrs

EO 13526 3.5(c)

#5A

**THE DIRECTOR OF CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE**

WASHINGTON, D.C. 20505

Deputy Director for National Foreign Assessment

APPROVED FOR RELEASE DATE: 05-Oct-2012

7 DEC 1979

MEMORANDUM FOR: Christine Dodson  
Staff Secretary, National Security Council

SUBJECT: Chinese Involvement in Pakistani Nuclear  
Development Program

REFERENCE: Your memorandum for the DCI, same subject,  
dated 20 November 1979,

The attached memorandum, "A Review of the Evidence of Chinese  
Involvement in Pakistan's Nuclear Weapons Program" is in response  
to your request contained in the reference.

[Redacted]

*Bruce Clarke*  
Bruce C. Clarke, Jr.

Attachment:

[Redacted]

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[Redacted]

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#5B

CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY  
NATIONAL FOREIGN ASSESSMENT CENTER  
OFFICE OF POLITICAL ANALYSIS

7 December 1979.

INTELLIGENCE MEMORANDUM

A Review of the Evidence of Chinese Involvement In  
Pakistan's Nuclear Weapons Program

China has almost certainly been involved in some mutually beneficial cooperation with Pakistan, particularly in connection with nuclear power, but the precise nature and extent of this cooperation is uncertain. (S [redacted])

There have been a number of reports of Chinese assistance, or, more often, of promises of Chinese assistance, with various aspects of nuclear weapons technology (including nuclear weapons delivery systems and nuclear test preparations), but none of these reports can be substantiated. (S [redacted])

The Chinese have, on several occasions, denied providing any direct aid to Pakistan's nuclear weapons development efforts, but lacking firm evidence, we cannot flatly rule out the possibility that some weapons-related aid has been given. Moreover, it is important to note that at the present stage of Pakistani nuclear development, any nuclear aid has some potential for furthering Islamabad's nuclear weapons program.

*\*This paper was prepared by [redacted] East Asia-Pacific Division, Office of Political Analysis in response to a request from the National Security Council. It is based on information as of 6 December 1979, and has been coordinated with the Deputy Directorate for Operations, the National Intelligence Officers for Nuclear Proliferation and China, and the Office of Scientific Intelligence. Comments and queries are welcome and should be directed to Chief, East Asia-Pacific Division, OPA on [redacted]*

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1974-1976

Pakistan's interest in involving China in its nuclear program dates back at least to 1974. Shortly after India exploded a nuclear device in May 1974, Pakistan began efforts to catch up with India's nuclear program [redacted]

[redacted]

[redacted] Since Pakistan was at this time starting up its nuclear program and seeking other foreign assistance, both technical and financial, the visit was probably intended to apprise Beijing of Pakistan's intent. [redacted]

There is no evidence of further movement on this matter until former Prime Minister Z. A. Bhutto raised the question of nuclear cooperation during a trip to Beijing. [redacted]

[redacted]

The Pakistanis and Chinese apparently discussed nuclear assistance again in December 1976, when it was clear that Canada would not furnish additional fuel for the Karachi Nuclear Power Plant (KANUPP), which the Canadians built in 1972. Pakistan reportedly requested that China provide fuel,

[redacted]

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technology, and spare parts previously supplied by Canada for KANUPP. There were also persistent rumors that the French were reconsidering their assistance in building a reprocessing plant. In addition, Pakistan may have asked for assistance in building a reprocessing plant if France backed out of its agreement. Islamabad reportedly asked again for an amount of nuclear material. [redacted]

[redacted] Chinese responded to this and earlier Pakistani expressions of concern over its nuclear program with assurances that China would assist Pakistan, but Beijing also urged Islamabad to seek assistance elsewhere. The Chinese said they were unable to furnish Pakistan a reprocessing plant. In any case, there is no evidence that China actually followed through on its offer of assistance. (S [redacted])

1977

On 29 January 1977 China and Pakistan signed a scientific and technical cooperation protocol in Islamabad. [redacted]

[redacted]

In accordance with a specific section of the January protocol, an eleven member Chinese team visited KANUPP in the summer of 1977. The team observed the plant both in operation and shut down. [redacted]

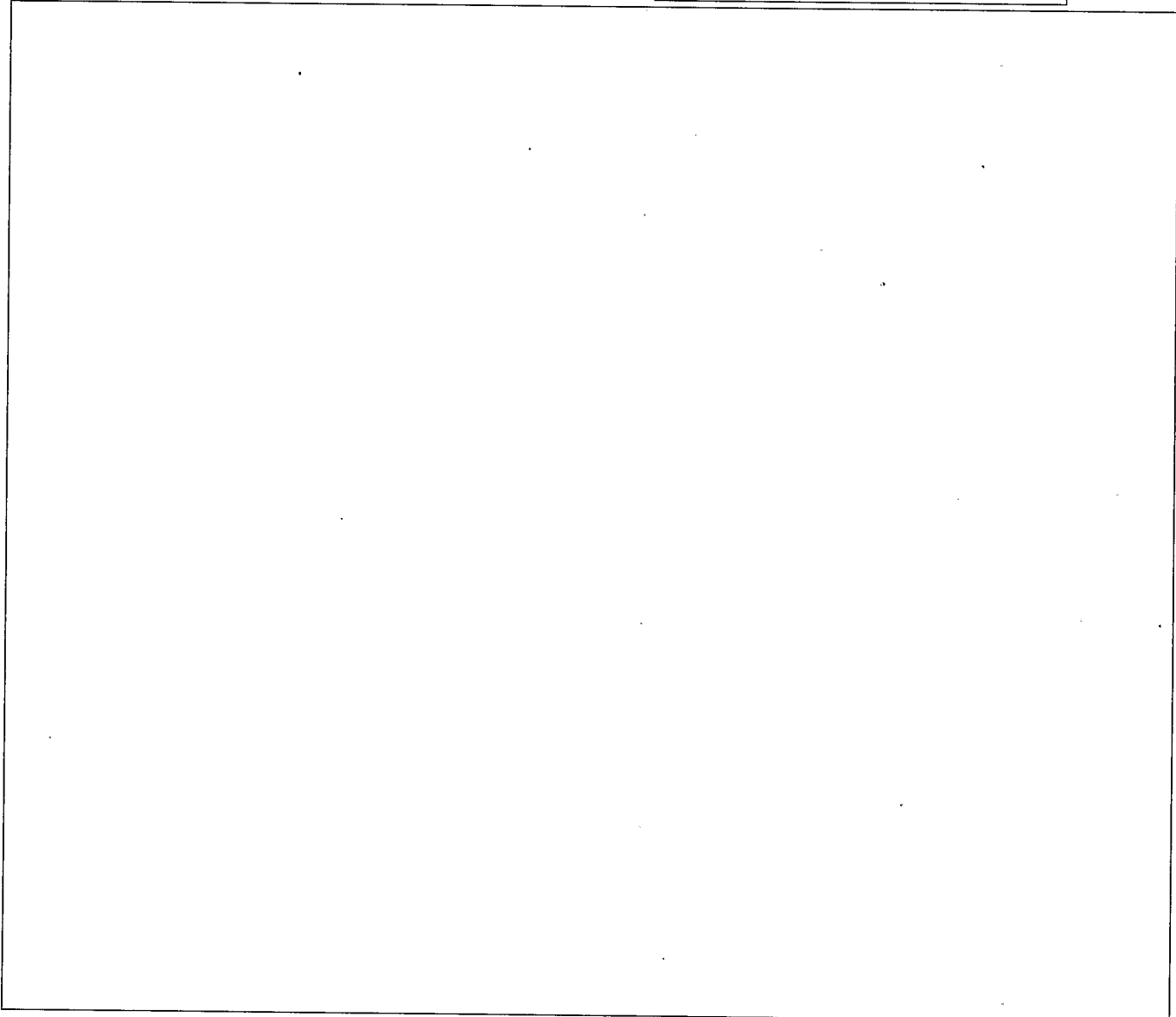
[redacted]

~~Top Secret~~ [redacted]

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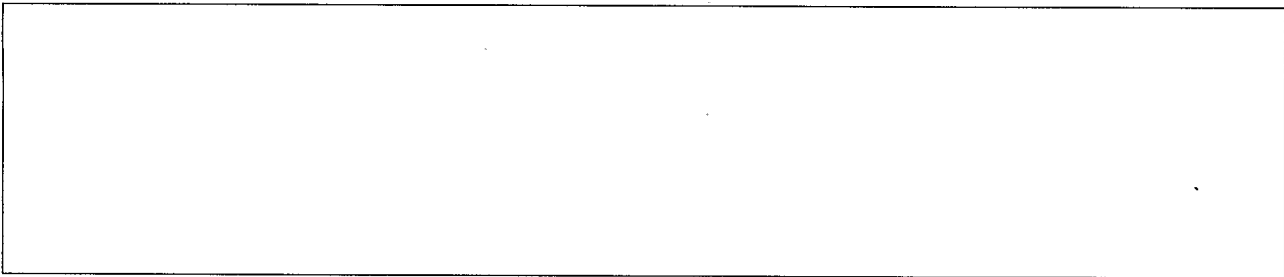
1978

By summer 1978 France had canceled its contract to build the reprocessing plant and Pakistan decided to continue on its own. Following this setback, there was speculation in several South Asian newspapers that China would provide Pakistan with a reprocessing plant. The Chinese have repeatedly denied these reports. (S [redacted])



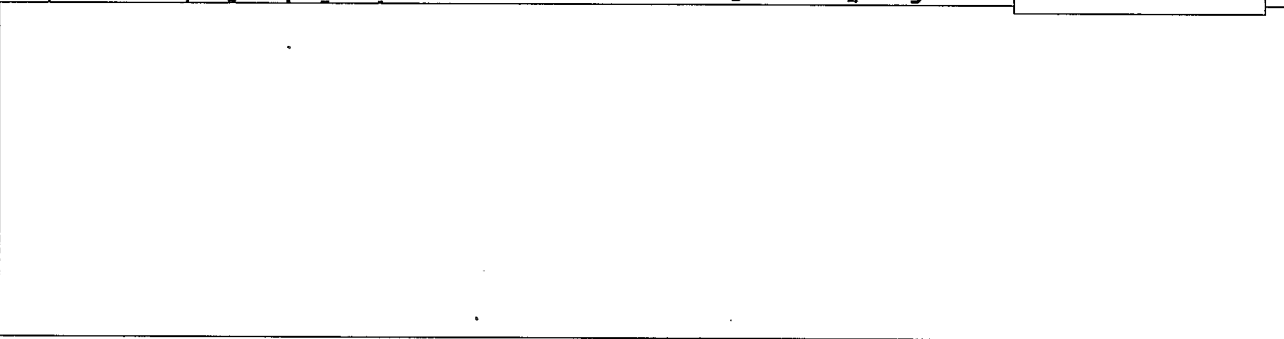
~~Top Secret~~ [redacted]

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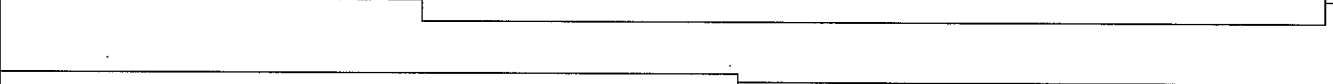


Chinese Denial of Assistance

On several occasions the Chinese have denied involvement in Pakistan's nuclear weapons development program. [redacted]



Chinese diplomats in South Asia have also told US dipomats on several occasions that they disapprove of Pakistani development of a bomb and have told Pakistan that they do not think it is a wise project. One Chinese diplomat in Islamabad, however, strongly defended Pakistan's right to a nuclear weapon to a US Embassy political officer in May 1979. Particularly since the coup in Afghanistan that brought a pro-Soviet regime to power, Chinese diplomats and officials have said that they would not pressure Pakistan on the subject and have urged the United States in strong terms to overlook the Pakistani nuclear program and to renew military assistance. [redacted]



[redacted] Both Vice Foreign Minister Zhang wei jin and Vice Premier Deng Xiaoping have recently made statements to American officials sympathetic to Pakistan's nuclear effort or down-playing its significance. [redacted]

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A Rationale For Assistance

Despite the inhibiting factors, the Chinese might have some incentive to assist Pakistan in their nuclear weapons development. China views Pakistan as a key ally and has felt compelled to strengthen political ties further since the rise to power of a pro-Soviet regime in Afghanistan. If the Chinese have decided to assist Pakistan, and it cannot be demonstrated that they have, it is probably based on an assumption that Pakistan will acquire the capability to produce nuclear weapons regardless of Chinese assistance. They may also be motivated by a desire to:

- Keep it informed of Pakistani nuclear weapons development.
- Keep Pakistan from drifting into the Soviet orbit.
- Provide some control over the program, possibly for the purpose of restraining it.
- Benefit China's own nuclear program, as the Pakistani program uses technologies with which China has had little experience. (S [redacted])