

**January 6, 1961**  
**State Department telegram 2821 to U.S. Embassy  
Paris**

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Although we wish to avoid further publicity at this time concerning Israeli atomic energy program and French-Israeli cooperation therein, we do not consider that information which has thus far been provided by statements of the two governments, either publicly or privately to us, has dispelled damaging air of secrecy or suspicions that program is not limited to peaceful uses. (We are repeating to Paris and London Tel Aviv's report of latest conversation with Ben Gurion.) Reports from Arab countries confirm gravity with which many view this possibility. Strong likelihood of severe repercussions in Middle East and elsewhere, not excluding eventual military operations for preventive purposes, remains matter of grave concern to President and myself. Public cover story to which French and Israeli Governments have stoutly adhered also indicates that they probably likewise entertain apprehensions about severe Arab or other reaction to program if that reactor is for purpose producing plutonium. ~~it is established~~ ~~SECRET~~ ~~SECRET~~

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Telegraphic transmission and classification approved by: The Secretary

Classified: 1/6/61

- NEA - Mr. Jones
- EUR - Mr. Davis
- G - Mr. Hare

S/S - Mr. Stoessel

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In view Couve's statement to me December 15 that a very secret French-Israeli agreement in fact provided for Israeli production in a Marcoule-type reactor of plutonium to be returned to France, I would like you to approach Couve again and discuss subject in above sense. You should indicate that in view of serious consequences which could follow from such program, or even from fear that it existed or might be developed, French would be well advised to ~~reconsider their policy of assistance to Israel with regard to construction of a plutonium production reactor.~~ Moreover to restore situation GDF should make unequivocally clear that its assistance is directed solely to peaceful uses.

If agreement mentioned to me by Couve has not been implemented, and program consists only of 24 megawatt research reactor, we feel that suspicions could be allayed by Israel opening such facility to visits by qualified scientists as is case with Israeli research reactor built with US assistance. We also believe IAEA representatives might be invited visit this new research reactor to examine measures <sup>to be</sup> taken to safeguard against diversion to military uses or to suggest safeguards which might be established.

I would like you to probe Couve on these points and submit a full report of your talk. I know you understand sensitivity this matter and need maintain secrecy particularly in view of nature my earlier discussion with Couve.

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FYI. As you know, photograph we have of Beersheba site indicates possibility of two different construction activities underway there, one of which might be the 24 megawatt research reactor but the other could be larger-scale production reactor to which Couve alluded in his talk with me. French and Israeli public statements have been careful not to preclude such possibility. We are also, as you know, seeking Israeli answers to certain direct questions but Israelis are completely ignorant of Couve's talk with me last month unless French have informed them. ~~XXXXXXXX~~ Today at executive session of Foreign Relations Committee I encountered heavy going on Israeli reactor project and French connection therewith. Dept. will testify further on this subject also in Executive Session January 9. ~~XXXXXXXX~~ before Middle East Sub-Committee. END FYI.

HERTZ

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