

May 22, 1979

**Letter from P. Lever to B.G. Cartledge, 'Pakistan's
Nuclear Programme'**

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Summary:

The first part of this document is a letter from the FCO's Paul Lever to Bryan Cartledge, in which Lever details his thoughts on Prime Minister Begin's recent letter to Prime Minister Thatcher. The second part are speaking notes prepared for Thatcher, in preparation for her upcoming meeting with Begin (scheduled for May 23, 1979, the day after Lever sent this letter.)

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In Carter
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Foreign and Commonwealth Office

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London SW1A 2AH
22 May 1979
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Dear Bryan,
Cc. Mr. Fullerton
DUSD. *Wish* (497)
(601) *R. S. T.*

Pakistan's Nuclear Programme

(497)

Thank you for your letter of 21 May enclosing the text of Mr Begin's message and the accompanying memorandum on which you asked for advice.

The Israelis are well informed about the Pakistani nuclear programme. While we share their concern, we believe that they may be making over much of Pakistan-Arab links. Although the Pakistanis are getting financial aid from Arab states the limited evidence available to us (and the Americans) does not support the suggestion that there is any plan to produce an "Islamic Bomb" or to produce weapons-usable material in Pakistan for other Islamic countries.

Emersons are mentioned in the memorandum because the supply in 1977/78 by their company of approximately 30 high frequency inverters to Pakistan (where they were said to be required for a textile factory) has been the subject of Parliamentary and public interest. We believe that Emersons UK (which is a subsidiary of a United States firm) acted in good faith. At the time the equipment was not subject to export control. It is incorrect to refer to inverters as "sensitive nuclear equipment"; they are widely used in industry for the precision control of the speed of electric motors. When however in 1978 it became apparent that Pakistan was seeking to purchase further inverters in connection with a clandestine uranium enrichment programme, steps were taken to bring inverters of relevant specification (and subsequently their components and subassemblies) under the scope of the Export of Goods Control Order. This has stopped further supplies from this country.

Most specially designed items of nuclear equipment are caught by existing export controls. Controls have been reviewed on a wide range of items having a potentially sensitive nuclear application. As a result, some other additional controls have been introduced. Others are still under consideration at official level. But it is not possible to impose effective controls on all items which could be useful for Pakistan's nuclear programme; some are widely available throughout the world and have a multiplicity of uses.

We have also worked closely with other governments, on the basis of the information available to us, to try to stop key items getting to Pakistan. This has had some success, but will not lead to the abandonment of the Pakistani programme. There must be a political solution, an issue on which we are keeping closely in touch with the Americans at official level.

/ The

B G Cartledge Esq

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The Israeli decision to raise this matter with us presents an opportunity to underline to the Israelis (who, like the Pakistanis, are not signatories of the NPT) that they also have a part to play in ensuring that nuclear weapons are not introduced into the Middle East.

Successive Israeli Governments since 1966 have said that Israel will not be the first to introduce nuclear weapons in the Middle East. We have no doubt that the Israelis have the technical ability to design and develop nuclear explosives and they should have enough plutonium for a small stockpile of nuclear weapons. We believe the Israelis could quickly assemble about a dozen low yield weapons without testing for delivery, probably by aircraft.

I enclose a speaking note for use in the Prime Minister's meeting with Mr Begin on 23 May. We will submit a substantive reply to Mr Begin's letter after their meeting.

I am copying this letter to Roger Facer (Ministry of Defence) and Martin Vile (Cabinet Office).

Yours etc

Paul
P Lever

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THE PRIME MINISTER'S LUNCH FOR MR BEGIN, 23 MAY

BRIEF NO. 3: PAKISTAN NUCLEAR

Speaking Note

1. The Government attach great importance to avoiding the spread of nuclear weapons. We are seriously concerned about the existence in Pakistan of unsafeguarded plants capable of producing nuclear explosive materials.
2. We too have reviewed the evidence for Pakistani-Arab collusion in developing a nuclear bomb. This would indeed be a grave development.
3. None of the evidence currently available to us suggests that there is any arrangement to produce an "Islamic Bomb" or to transfer weapons-usable material from Pakistan to other Islamic states or organisations. But we shall keep this under careful review.
4. But non-proliferation is indivisible. It would be an equally serious development if Israel developed nuclear weapons. This would inevitably lead to determined Arab efforts to do the same.
5. The fact that Arabs have no nuclear weapons at present is no guarantee for the future. The risk of the spread of nuclear weapons into the Middle East can only grow with time. This is an additional and powerful reason why Israel should accordingly pursue the process of seeking accommodation with the rest of her Arab neighbours with all vigour.
6. We have tightened export controls on nuclear and nuclear related items in recent months and have urged other Governments to take similar action. We hope this will slow down the Pakistani programme. But in the long run a political solution to the problem of South Asia is the only stable basis for preventing the spread of nuclear weapons there.

Joint Nuclear Unit

22 May 1979

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