

August 25, 1970

**United States Department of State, Memorandum
from Martin Jacobs to Mr. Nelson on South African
Nuclear Scientist's Visit US Nuclear Testing
Facilities**

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<https://digitalarchive.umd.edu/document/116593>

Summary:

Martin Jacobs reports that Dr. J. V. Retief, Senior Scientist of the National Nuclear Research Center of the South African Atomic Energy Board requested permission to visit an Army Corps research facility, the Cratering Group Research Laboratory at Livermore, California. Jacobs was concerned that "there might be political repercussions if it appeared the US was assisting South Africa to produce nuclear explosives as a prelude to weapons development."

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UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT

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Memorandum

TO : AF/S - Mr. Nelson

DATE: August 25, 1970

FROM : AF/S - Martin Jacobs

SUBJECT: South African Nuclear Scientist's Wish to Visit US Nuclear Explosion Facilities

Dr. +
Australia

Dr. J. V. Retief, Senior Scientist of the National Nuclear Research Center of the South African Atomic Energy Board, is presently at Stanford University studying the feasibility of peaceful nuclear explosions. (He is not under any kind of US Government auspices.) Dr. Retief wishes to visit the Army Corps of Engineers Nuclear Cratering Group Research Laboratory at Livermore, California, this coming Thursday, August 27, as well as other Atomic Energy Commission facilities doing work in nuclear explosives. The Defense Department has asked if we have any objection to such visits.

The briefing that would be given Dr. Retief at Livermore would be unclassified. Other foreign nationals have been given this briefing; AEC and SCI have no objection to doing the same for Dr. Retief. Nevertheless, there might be political repercussions if it appeared the US was assisting South Africa to produce nuclear explosives as a prelude to weapons development. There is no evidence that the South Africans intend to develop nuclear weapons, but appearances do count. To deny Dr. Retief access to Livermore, on the other hand, would introduce a new irritant into US/South African relations and might be interpreted by the South Africans as a breach of our agreement on peaceful uses of atomic energy.

ACTION REQUESTED:

In view of the possible repercussions, I suggest that you obtain AF clearance of Dr. Retief's visits to US nuclear explosion facilities.

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AF/S:MJacobs:tw

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