

## **September 1977**

# **Draft Letter to B. Cardledge on Conversation with US Deputy Undersecretary of State Joseph Nye on South African Nuclear Intentions**

### **Citation:**

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### **Summary:**

Nye stated that at present the United States preferred to "concentrate on pressing South Africa to adhere to the NPT rather than continuing to enquire about the nature of the Kalahari facility." The State Department assessment was that while South Africa was capable of building a bomb at short notice, they did not actually plan to test one at this time.

### **Credits:**

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### **Original Language:**

English

### **Contents:**

Original Scan

CLASSIFICATION  
Top Secret,  
Secret,  
Confidential,  
Restricted,  
Unclassified.

FOIA ACTIVITY MARKING

In Confidence

DRAFT LETTER

Type 1 +

To:--  
B Gartledge Esq  
No 10 Downing Street

From  
Private Secretary  
Telephone No. Ext.  
Department

SOUTH AFRICAN NUCLEAR INTENTIONS

You said in your letter of 9 September that the Prime Minister wished us to take a suitable opportunity to establish the purpose of the Kalahari facility.

FCO officials had an opportunity recently to discuss this with Nye, the Deputy to the Under Secretary for Security Assistance at the State Department. He said - and Gerard Smith has made the same point to FCO officials - that the Americans preferred at present to concentrate on pressing South Africa to adhere to the NPT rather than continuing to enquire about the nature of the Kalahari facility. He said, however, that US intelligence experts were convinced, after examining the satellite photographs, that the Kalahari facility could have no military purpose other than nuclear testing. The State Department assessment was that the South Africans might intend to manufacture a certain amount of highly enriched uranium of weapons grade at the Valindaba pilot enrichment plant and complete the testing facility: but not to carry out a test. South Africa would then be in a position to acquire a nuclear weapons capability at short notice should she so wish. That is one reason why we and the Americans see an urgent need for some kind of international inspection at Valindaba and have been pressing the South Africans to agree to it.

/The

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03/06/2010 14:37

The Prime Minister has seen the JIC's assessments of Kalahari facility. In the view of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office it seems likely that the South Africans have been, and may still be, taking steps to equip themselves with the ability to test a nuclear device at short notice; their intention would have been, and may still be, to minimise the time it would take to prepare a test after they had taken a decision to do so. In this connection, evidence of continuing work on the site, if it becomes available, will be significant. South African intentions may be predicated on a belief that under intense international pressure and in the light of a gravely deteriorating security situation, it may one day seem essential to them to demonstrate by a test explosion that they are capable of developing nuclear weapons.

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