

August 2, 1980

Memorandum, 'Japanese Reprocessing,' with fax cover sheet from Henry Owen to Gerard C. Smith attached

Citation:

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Summary:

The memorandum questions Director General Yatabe's certainty about the second reprocessing plant, citing a conclusion of Japanese Atomic Energy Research Institute's draft report that Japan does not need the second plant.

Original Language:

English

Contents:

Original Scan

Authority NND 66817

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1980 AUG 2 PM 12 41

CALL ROOM

MESSAGE NO. 1584 CLASSIFICATION Secret NO. PAGES 1
FROM Henry Owen (Name) (Extension) (Room Number)

MESSAGE DESCRIPTION

TO (Agency) DELIVER TO: Dept/Room No. Extension

State

The Honorable Gerard Smith
Ambassador-at-Large
The Department of State
Room 6333

Telephones: 632-3752

with the following message:

Please telephone me re attached.

Henry Owen

REMARKS:

DECLASSIFIED

Authority NND 66817*done 9/17***SUBJECT:**

Japanese Reprocessing (U)

A recent NODIS cable from Embassy Tokyo reports that the prestigious Japanese Atomic Energy Research Institute has completed a draft report which concludes that: (S)

- Thermal recycle (i.e. recycling plutonium in the current generation of light-water reactors) is not attractive and should not be pursued in the near term.
- Japan should not build a large new reprocessing facility.
- The small reprocessing plant at Tokai-Mura can supply all of Japan's foreseeable plutonium needs for R&D on breeders and advanced reactors.
- Plutonium recovered from Japanese spent fuel reprocessed in France and the UK would be excess and should be sold to those countries. (S)

The draft report is being reviewed by a high-level group including the Japanese Foreign Office, the Ministry of Industry, the Science and Technology Agency, the Atomic Energy Commission, and Japanese industry. Except for two industrialists, all of these organizations have agreed in principle with the above conclusions. It stands a good chance of becoming the basis of official Japanese policy, whether openly acknowledged or not. (S)

This is something of a bombshell. Following recent private Japanese projections that their installed nuclear capacity will be one-half of recent official projections, it provides the most impressive confirmation we have yet seen of the basic premises underlying the President's 1977 policies: that the need for large scale reprocessing and commercial use of plutonium remains distant and uncertain, that commitments to those technologies are uneconomic, and that this is true even for countries as energy-dependent as Japan. (C)

SECRET

Review 8/22/86