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UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT

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Memorandum

SECRET

RM/R

TO : NEA - Mr. Talbot

DATE: December 27, 1962

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FROM : NE - Rodger P. Davies RPD

SUBJECT: Second Inspection of Israel's Dimona Reactor.

The following is submitted in confirmation of our telephonic conversation of last night.

In response to your query as to whether the second inspection of the Dimona reactor was satisfactory, I contacted Mr. Charles Thomas, ISA, to confirm our understanding that the two inspectors were not told in advance of the visit, that they were permitted only a short time at the site, and that they did not see the entire installation. Mr. Thomas said that the Israelis had been very reluctant to agree to the inspection, which had been preceded by repeated requests over several months, that the men were taken to Dimona without advance notification, that they had spent only a short time there, but that the visit was satisfactory in that the AEC technicians could confirm that the reactor is not a power reactor but rather a large research reactor. To corroborate this, Mr. Thomas agreed, despite the lateness of the hour, to telephone Mr. Thomas Haycock, one of the inspectors, who was recuperating from an attack of pneumonia.

Mr. Haycock said that he and his fellow inspector had been invited to drive to the Dead Sea on a Wednesday (September 26). In mid-afternoon, their host said they were passing near Dimona and that he would arrange a call on the Director. On arrival, they found that the Director was not there, but they were received and briefed by the principal engineers and spent approximately forty minutes on a conducted tour of the site. During this tour, the inspectors were not certain whether they were guests of their scientist-hosts or on an inspection. Although they did not have time to see the entire installation and although there some buildings they did not enter, they were able to confirm the research nature of the installation. They were offered an opportunity to return Thursday morning but, as this would have required a four-day layover for the next available transportation, they elected not to return, feeling that the basic objective of their mission had been obtained.

As I understood that a group representing the intelligence community had met recently to assess the Dimona inspection, I spoke with Jim Spain today. He said that there had been such a meeting last week at which, unfortunately, Mr. Haycock, because of his illness, was not present.

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The Agency's Director of Intelligence felt that, while the immediate objective of the visit may have been satisfied, certain basic intelligence requirements were not. There were inconsistencies between the first and second inspection reports insofar as the usages attributed to some equipment were concerned. There were also questions as to whether in fact the reactor might give Israel a nuclear weapons capability. Thus, the group did not agree with the inspectors that the inspection was completely satisfactory.

The fact (not cited in enclosed report) that the inspectors were invited to return to the site the following day would seem to indicate that there was no deliberate hanky-panky involved on the part of the Israeli, although there is the possibility that the scheduling of a visit on the eve of the team's departure was designed to discourage its return.

Attachment:

Copy of AEC Report on
Visit to Israel dated
October 12, 1962.

NEA/NE:RPD:ajm