

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 NEA-09 ISO-00 AEC-05 FEA-01 ACDA-05 CIAE-00

INR-07 IO-10 L-02 NSAE-00 NSC-05 RSC-01 OES-03 SS-15

PA-01 USIA-06 PRS-01 EB-07 COME-00 /091 W

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R 231557Z JAN 75

FM AMEMBASSY PARIS

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6091

INFO USMISSION EC BRUSSELS

AMEMBASSY BEIRUT

AMEMBASSY BONN

AMEMBASSY TEHRAN

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BEIRUT PASS BAGHDAD

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: TECH, TGEN

SUBJECT: IRAQI INTEREST IN BUYING FRENCH NATURAL
URANIUM POWER REACTOR

1. THE IRAQIS ARE DISCUSSING WITH THE FRENCH
NUCLEAR AGENCY THE POSSIBILITY OF BUYING A 500-
MEGAWATT (ELECTRIC) NUCLEAR POWER STATION. THE
INTERESTING ASPECT IS THAT THE IRAQIS ARE CON-
SIDERING THE GAS GRAPHITE NATURAL URANIUM REACTOR
DESIGN, ABANDONED BY THE FRENCH IN
1970 IN FAVOR OF U.S. LIGHT WATER DESIGNS, USING
ENRICHED URANIUM FUEL. MFA NUCLEAR AFFAIRS
DIRECTOR ALLINE SAID THE DISCUSSIONS HAVE BEEN
GOING ON FOR SEVERAL MONTHS BUT ARE STILL AT
A "PRELIMINARY" STAGE. HE VOLUNTEERED THAT THE
IRAQI PREFERENCE FOR THE GAS GRAPHITE REACTOR
OWED TO THEIR DESIRE TO BE INDEPENDENT OF FOREIGN
SOURCES OF ENRICHMENT.

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2. FRANCE HAS BUILT FIVE GAS GRAPHITE NATURAL URANIUM REACTOR POWER STATIONS WITH A CAPACITY EACH OF ABOUT 500 MEGAWATTS (ELECTRIC). ONE OF THESE IS LOCATED IN VANDELLOS, SPAIN, NEAR THE FRENCH BORDER. THE LAST TO BE PUT UNDER CONSTRUCTION (ST. LAURENT II), IN 1966, WAS COMPLETED IN 1972.

3. COMMENT: GIVEN THIS TIME LAPSE, THE COST OF BUILDING JUST ONE GAS GRAPHITE REACTOR WOULD PROBABLY BE ASTRONOMICAL. AS LE MONDE COMMENTED, ENGINEERING TEAMS WOULD HAVE TO BE RECONSTITUTED, INDUSTRIAL CAPACITY REBUILT, PROBABLY NOT TO BE REUSED UNLESS OF COURSE THE FRENCH COULD FIND OTHER BUYERS. PERHAPS MORE IMPORTANT FOR U.S. INTERESTS IS THE EVENTUAL QUESTION OF SAFEGUARDS. THE FRENCH DO NOT HAVE INTERNATIONAL SAFEGUARDS ON THE REACTOR THEY BUILT IN VANDELLOS, SPAIN. THEY CLAIM THAT GIVEN THE CONTINUING PRESENCE OF FRENCH TECHNICIANS AND THE REPROCESSING IN FRANCE OF SPENT FUEL, THERE IS LITTLE POSSIBILITY OF AN UNDETECTED DIVERSION OF PLUTINIUM.
RUSH

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: GOVERNMENT PROCUREMENT, URANIUM, NUCLEAR REACTORS, NEGOTIATIONS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 23 JAN 1975
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: MorefiRH
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1975PARIS01944
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: N/A
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D750026-0204
From: PARIS
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1975/newtext/t19750126/aaaaaxcj.tel
Line Count: 84
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION EUR
Original Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 2
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: n/a
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: MorefiRH
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 17 APR 2003
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <17 APR 2003 by KelleyW0>; APPROVED <16 MAY 2003 by MorefiRH>
Review Markings:

Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
05 JUL 2006

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: IRAQI INTEREST IN BUYING FRENCH NATURAL URANIUM POWER REACTOR
TAGS: TECH, TGEN, IR, FR
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 05 JUL 2006