

November 17, 1989

Letter, Richard Carter to Herbert Beukes

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Summary:

Richard Carter writes to the US Ambassador to South Africa proposing that South Africa "come clean" about its nuclear program.

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English

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TO : HERBERT BEUKES

FROM : RICHARD CARTER

DATE : 17 NOVEMBER 1989

MAIN POINTS ARISING FROM LUNCHEON ON 14 NOVEMBER 1989

1. AEC's two main arguments are -
 - ANC takeover - therefore pressure on SA to accede NOW
 - We get no quid pro quo for accession
2. Enrichment package produced by AEC is 50% more expensive than international markets. (Not more expensive than SPOT market, but no power generating utility buys on the spot market because a package is sought - ie. uranium, enrichment, fuel rod manufacture, delivery, loading and end of use removal, dumping and/or reprocessing).
3. AEC should be attempting to penetrate international enrichment markets - it can provide the package mentioned above. WdeV is in principle against trying for political reasons. Stumpf easier. Initial enquiries have shown some interest - Taiwan.
4. ARMSCOR no longer committed to a weapons program. Feel that a satellite and/or conventional delivery system program is worth focusing on. Considerable financial saving.
5. Decontamination is a major problem. Even a major, 3 year decontamination program will be unlikely to completely eradicate all traces of highly enriched (95%)

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- product. Leaks from cooling tower, complex machinery etc aggravate this problem. IAEA inspectors using sensitive equipment will be able to detect the prior existence of 95% enriched product.
6. Existing items could be degraded within about a year without trace ie. reduced to highly enriched gas. Some records would have to be destroyed. Highly enriched product thus created could be further degraded over time but para 5 remains still applicable.
 7. Suggestion : That 6 be implemented as an accession strategy. That SA "come clean" and admit that it has enriched uranium to weapons grade, but that it has not made weapons. Doing this does away with the lengthy, expensive, dubious decontamination program. The process could be completed in 12-18 months, after which accession could take place followed by +18 months safeguards negotiations.
 8. If we came clean on the 95% enriched product, we would have to do very little arguing over safeguards. The "secret" would be out. Manufacture of weapons however need never be admitted. Only 2/4 of the Y-facility's units would have to be shut down and dismantled or "transformed". This could probably be achieved within the 18 months period before accession.
 8. AEC probably does not have the manpower - or inclination - to embark on the time consuming decontamination program. It is considered to be "non-productive" and bad for morale.
 10. WdeV is "yesterday's man" using yesterday's arguments. A more pragmatic approach may be expected from Stumpf - although he remains at this time "under Wynand's influence".