

DEPARTMENT OF STATE
AMBASSADOR AT LARGE
WASHINGTON

OC S/AL
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To: The Secretary
U - Mr. Ball
NEA - Mr. Talbot } received copies
S/P - Mr. Rostow }

From: S/AL - Llewellyn E. Thompson [E]

Subject: Indian Nuclear Weapons Capability

It seems clear that a major factor in the Indian decision on whether to develop a nuclear capability or not is the question of assurances from the United States and the Soviet Union. India will undoubtedly wish to remain a nonaligned country, which I should think would exclude any formal United States guarantee which, in any event, would have serious disadvantages for us and which would probably result in our having to give similar guarantees to a large number of other countries. On the other hand, India may not be satisfied with very vague generalities. In these circumstances, I suggest we might consider suggesting to the Indians that they make a unilateral statement which would cover two main points.

The first would be that India is not concerned over any problem of nuclear blackmail since it does not intend to submit to nuclear threats from anyone. The second point would state that if a nuclear weapon were actually used against India, the Indian Government is confident that the major nuclear powers would take appropriate action, either individually or through the United Nations. The Indian declaration would conclude by stating that in the absence of a radical change of circumstances, India does not intend to build nuclear weapons but to devote its resources and energies to the welfare of its people.

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The difficult problem would be the wording of our response to such a statement. I believe that, in general, we could state that we believe the Indians have made a very wise decision and that while the United States will of course retain its freedom to make its decision in the light of all the circumstances existing at any given time, it has no doubt that any country which considered using nuclear weapons against India would be so aware of the heavy price it would have to pay for such action, that such a contingency is highly unlikely.

If you think this course of action has any merit, perhaps I could bring it up for discussion in the Non-proliferation Committee.

Approve ^{10/2}
Prefer

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