

**James Li**[@5149jamesli](#)Feb 14, 2025 • 10 tweets • 5 min read • [Read on X](#)

Trump wants to make a historic nuclear deal with China and Russia. Great!

But there's one nuclear-armed country that never gets mentioned — because officially... it “doesn't exist.”

Here's the untold story of the world's worst-kept nuclear secret. 🧵 1/



2/ Israel's nuclear program began in the 1950s with help from France and later, stolen U.S. materials.

A now-declassified State Department memo from 1960 warned that Israel was building and hiding a weapons program under the guise of a “peaceful reactor” at Dimona.

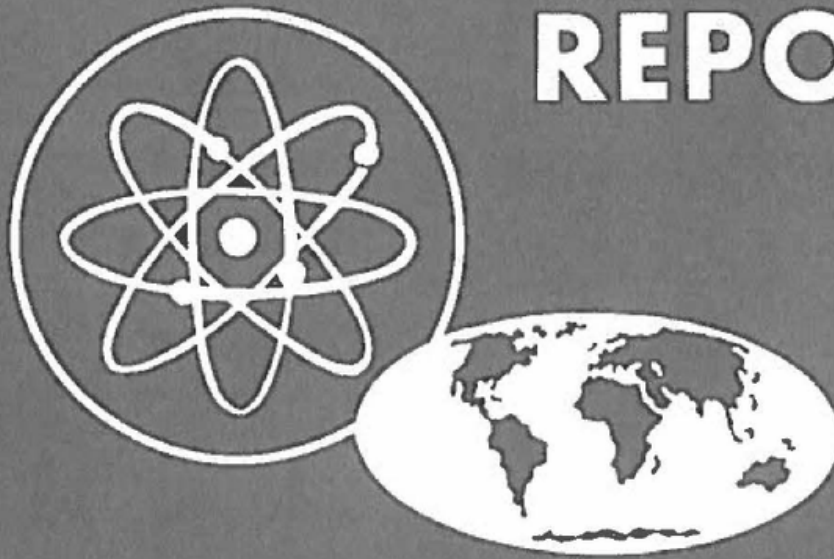
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INTELLIGENCE

REPORT



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By *[initials]* NARA Date 5-6-19

ISRAELI REACTOR SITE 60-3
December 9, 1960

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Declassified KH-4 CORONA November 11 1968

3/ In the summer 1963, President Kennedy sent a series of increasingly urgent letters to Israeli PM David Ben-Gurion (and later Levi Eshkol) demanding full inspections of Dimona — including threatening to cut off U.S. aid if Israel refused.

A few months later, JFK was dead. 🤔



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Following letter from President should be conveyed Prime Minister Eshkol, preferably at your initial meeting with him:

"Dear Mr. Prime Minister:

"It gives me great personal pleasure to extend congratulations as you assume your responsibilities as Prime Minister of Israel. You have our friendship and best wishes in your new tasks. It is on one of these that I am writing you at this time.

"You are aware, I am sure, of the exchanges which I had with Prime Minister Ben-Gurion concerning American visits to Israel's nuclear facility at Dimona. Most recently, the Prime Minister wrote to me on May 27. His words reflected a most intense personal consideration of a problem that I know is not easy for your Government, as it is not for mine. We welcomed the former Prime Minister's strong reaffirmation that Dimona will be devoted exclusively to peaceful purposes and the reaffirmation also of Israel's willingness to permit periodic visits to Dimona.

Drafted by: NEA:NE:WR Crawford;ebb
7/3/63

Telegraphic transmission and
classification approved by:

NEA:Phillips Talbot

Clearances: SCI:Mr. Kretzmann NE:Mr. Davies S/S: Mr. Nobby White House: Mr. Komer
(in draft)

~~XXXXXXXXXXXX~~
M-Mr. Harriman

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4/ After JFK's assassination, U.S. inspections of Dimona became a joke — Israel controlled the visits and staged inspections.

In 1969, Nixon struck a secret deal with Israeli PM Golda Meir:

- ✗ The U.S. would stop asking questions
- ✗ Israel would never test or declare its nukes



5/ Why would Nixon let Israel off the hook?

A few key reasons:

- 📌 Pro-Israel lobbying — already a powerful force in DC
- 📌 Cold War politics — Israel was a key ally against Soviet-backed Arab states

📌 Blackmail? — some believe Israel had kompromat on Nixon before Watergate



6/ Every U.S. president since Nixon — Republican & Democrat — has maintained silence on Israel’s “nuclear ambiguity”, meaning they never admit to having nukes.

Israel has also never had to sign the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) — which Iran is constantly pressured over.





7/ In 1986, an Israeli nuclear technician named Mordechai Vanunu leaked photos of Israel's nuclear weapons to The Sunday Times, confirming what many had suspected — Israel had an advanced nuclear arsenal, possibly hundreds of warheads.



8/ Mossad wasn't about to let Vanunu's leak slide.

They used a honeytrap — a female agent posing as a romantic interest — to lure him to Italy. Once in Rome, he was drugged, kidnapped, and flown back to Israel.

Tried in secret, he was sentenced to 18 years, mostly in solitary.





9/ Despite being an open secret, Israel's nukes are rarely discussed in Western media. Why?

Since Clinton, every U.S. president has signed a secret letter agreeing not to interfere with Israel's nukes.

Journalists who raise the issue risk being labeled antisemitic or censored.



Then, in 2009, a new President, Barack Obama, took office. Almost from the start, Netanyahu was distrustful of Obama, and vice versa. “With Obama, we were all crazy,” an Israeli official told me. That April, Obama delivered an aspirational speech in Prague, setting out “America’s commitment to seek the peace and security of a world without nuclear weapons.” Obama’s advisers subsequently learned “how paranoid Bibi was that Obama was going to try to take away Israel’s nuclear weapons,” a former U.S. official told me, adding, “Of course, that was never our intent.” Obama signed an updated version of the letter in May, 2009.

10/ Today, it is estimated that Israel has 80 - 400 nukes — more than Pakistan, India, the UK, and France.

Yet, U.S. taxpayers still send \$3B in aid every year.

If Trump is serious about "de-nuking", he should start with the country still pretending its nukes don't exist.



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