

SECRET

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

January 17, 1980

MEMORANDUM FOR: Gerard C. Smith
Henry Owen

FROM: Frank Press *FP*

SUBJECT: South Atlantic Event (U)

As you know, the panel that I brought together at your request to analyze the South Atlantic event concluded that "despite extensive analysis of all data available, the Panel cannot determine whether or not the light signal that was recorded by one VELA satellite (No. 6911) over the South Atlantic on September 22, 1979 was generated by a nuclear explosion." Of great weight to the Panel was that there was no evidence that would clearly corroborate the occurrence of a nuclear explosion on September 22, evidence which had been obtained on all signals emanating from nuclear explosions. The Panel recommended continuing the search for such data along with detailed analyses of meteoroid statistics and previous non-nuclear VELA signals. Obviously, we cannot exclude the possibility that this continuing data gathering and analysis may turn up some corroborative evidence in the future if a nuclear explosion had actually taken place. (S)

In light of this situation I urge that our discussions with other governments leave open the possibility for finding such corroborating evidence in the future. Not only will this procedure reflect the facts as we know them but it will also avoid any misleading appearance of collusion between us and other governments. (S)

SECRET

Review on January 17, 1986

02121C