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June 25, 1957

AEC 663/12  
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ATOMIC ENERGY COMMISSION

PRELIMINARY REPORT ON OPERATION GRAPPLE

Note by the Secretary

The attached letter from the Assistant to the Secretary of Defense (AE) to the Chairman, JCAE, is circulated for the information of the Commission by request of the General Manager. The letter has been referred to the Division of Military Application.

W. B. McCool  
Secretary

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NU01972006  
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OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY OF DEFENSE  
WASHINGTON 25, D. C.

June 13, 1957

Dear Mr. Chairman:

I refer to my letters of March 6, 1957, and March 14, 1957, regarding the attendance of a U. S. observer team at the British nuclear weapon test near Christmas Island. This letter is to give you a preliminary report of the results of the visit.

The operation was the first British test in the Pacific and consisted of an air drop of a British device. The aiming point for the air drop was a tip of Malden Island. Offset bombing techniques were used as the target was about one and one half miles off shore. The actual bombing operation was carried out quite well. The miss distance was estimated to be 200 yards short and 600 yards to the right from 42,000 feet drop altitude. Bomb was fuzed for air burst at 8 - 10,000 feet.

U. S. witnesses were 30 miles away, and were provided complete (head to toe) thermal protection. Twelve seconds after detonation, when U. S. observers were permitted to view the shot, it was estimated that the fireball was 7500 feet in diameter. The base of the cloud rose to 51 - 55,000 feet.

The British have thanked the Department for the cooperation which they received in maintaining security of the timing of the first shots by not announcing the names or participation of the U.S. observers.

Sincerely yours,

/s/

Herbert B. Loper  
Assistant to the Secretary  
of Defense (Atomic Energy)

The Honorable Carl T. Durham  
Chairman, Joint Committee on Atomic Energy  
Congress of the United States

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143