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Department of Energy  
Washington, D.C. 20545

January 22, 1980

The Honorable Adrian P. Winkel  
High Commissioner  
Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands  
Saipan, Mariana Islands 96950

Dear Mr. Winkel:

This is to inform you that the visit to Rongelap and Utirik which normally is scheduled in the January-February time frame by the staff of the Brookhaven National Laboratory Medical Department, in conjunction with physicians from hospitals and academic institutions around the United States, will, of necessity, have to be deferred.

You may be aware that the Department of Energy, through Holmes and Narver, Inc., contracted with U.S. Oceanography for the use of the Liktanur II to be used in support of all of the Department's activities in the Marshall Islands. Initially, the U.S. Coast Guard classified this vessel as an oceanographic research vessel based upon the purposes for which the vessel would be used. More recently, however, the Coast Guard has reexamined this situation and has reversed its earlier decision regarding the Liktanur II's classification category. In the opinion of the Coast Guard, several of the activities which the Liktanur II supports, including the medical visits, do not come within the definition of an oceanographic research vessel. Consequently, we are precluded from using the vessel, at present, for other than marine studies.

We are attempting to resolve this difficulty in which this situation places us. Legal counsel is exploring the possible approaches to the Coast Guard, and inquiries are being made regarding the availability and suitability of U.S. Navy vessels and other possible vessels available for charter. Furthermore, the Coast Guard may consider requests for the Liktanur II's usage on a case-by-case basis.

Because of the Coast Guard decision and the uncertainties surrounding future use of the vessel, the Brookhaven Medical Department was compelled to inform the participating physicians that the

January-February trip to Rongelap and Utirik was in question, at which time the physicians committed themselves to other professional responsibilities. As soon as we can obtain a firm commitment on the use of that vessel, or any other vessel, for support of the medical visits, Brookhaven will attempt to assemble a team of physicians to participate in the visit. It requires approximately a three to six month lead time, however, to accommodate the professional schedules of these physicians.

Therefore, we regret to inform you that there will be some delay before another medical visit can be scheduled to Rongelap and Utirik Atolls. We are making every effort to resolve this matter and to minimize any delay.

With belated best personal wishes and greetings for the New Year.

Sincerely,

Bruce W. Wachholz, Ph.D.  
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