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ATOMIC ENERGY COMMISSION
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Maj. Gen. Frank A. Camm
Assistant General Manager for Military Application

DISPOSITION OF RUNIT ISLAND

This is in response to your memorandum of August 3, 1972, same subject, requesting comments on a suggestion that Runit Island in Eniwetok Atoll be withdrawn from the pending restoration program so that plutonium studies under AEC control could be conducted over a period of several years. From staff discussions with Mr. Gordon Facer (MA), we understand that these studies would be primarily a scientific service provided by the AEC to the Department of Defense (DOD), and the DOD would still have the overall responsibility for restoration of Runit eventually. We also understand that Runit, if not the most highly contaminated island in the Atoll, is probably one of the several most highly contaminated islands.

Since the AEC is being asked to provide the DOD with radiological safety services for this restoration program, we believe it would be within our prerogatives to suggest a change in the sequence and purpose of studies on Runit. Under this changed approach, a concerted effort would be made to decontaminate Runit first. This effort would include an evaluation of different methods of decontamination and of the occupational risks to the decontamination crews, possibly leading to easier and safer restoration of the other islands. Conversely, if decontamination of a grossly contaminated island of this type is necessarily so destructive as to be impractical, it would seem better to demonstrate this on a single island than with a more widespread effort.

Although this division is not in a position to evaluate the scientific benefits of the proposed studies on Runit, we suggest that they be evaluated not only in themselves but in contrast to the benefits of the other approach.

Frank K. Pittman Director
Division of Waste Management
and Transportation

cc: J. R. Totter, Director, BER
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