

UNITED STATES
ENERGY RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT ADMINISTRATION
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20545

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MAR 12 1976

Mr. F. Monroe Zeder, Director
Office of Territorial Affairs
Department of the Interior
Washington, D.C. 20240

Dear Mr. Zeder:

This letter is intended to clarify ERDA policy regarding radiological monitoring of present and future inhabitants of Bikini Atoll. In the course of this statement, we will address certain misunderstandings, which have arisen relative to the nature of examinations that are conducted by Dr. Robert A. Conard and members of the Brookhaven medical team.

The Brookhaven team has conducted a program of periodic medical examination of the Rongelap and Utirik people because of their exposure to fallout in 1954. However, in contrast to that program, apart from the humanitarian care discussed below, only radiological monitoring examinations have been performed on those workers and native inhabitants of Bikini who have returned to that Atoll. This is being done at the request of the Department of the Interior. The levels of radioactivity on Bikini are considered too low to justify a special program of medical examinations. This view, expressed on numerous occasions in the past, remains valid today. On the other hand, we regard personnel monitoring, carried out by means of the bioassay examination of urine specimens and by whole body counting of persons living in Bikini Atoll, as an intrinsic element of the program of follow-up monitoring of the Bikini people and their environment. If the rate at which radiation dose is received were to exceed expectations, the radiological monitoring program will detect such a situation long before accumulated doses would approach or exceed acceptable standards.

As a result of the circumstance that Dr. Conard conducts both the medical examinations and the environmental (one must look at the environment as including people) radiological monitoring programs at Rongelap and Utirik, the two programs have come to be regarded




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as the same activity. In fact, these are two distinctly different activities done for different reasons. The medical examinations are related to health and any radiation effects on the people while radiological monitoring of the environment, including people, is related to radiation exposures and radiation protection considerations. For logistic reasons, the visit to Bikini for environmental monitoring has been included during the circuit through the islands by Dr. Conard, Dr. Knudsen or Dr. Kotrady when the Rongelap and Utirik medical examinations are made. The whole body measurements, collection of urine specimens and samples of soil, plants and animals on Bikini could be handled equally well by technicians in the absence of medical personnel.

A press release issued by the AEC in 1969 included a statement that the AEC has named "Dr. Conard to conduct routine medical surveillance of the people of Bikini as they return to their home Atoll." That statement is misleading and should not be interpreted to mean that adverse health effects are expected and that they must be detected and treated. As a supplement to the program of medical care provided by the Government of the Trust Territory, Dr. Conard and members of his team have diagnosed and treated any medical disorders that were brought to their attention while on Bikini Atoll. Such care has not been and is not projected to be part of any scientific program. It is a voluntary, humanitarian activity conducted at the pleasure of the Government of the Trust Territory, the Bikini people and the health aide on duty in the Atoll.

In this letter I hope that I have succeeded in separating the responsibility of ERDA, delegated to certain laboratories including Brookhaven, to monitor radioactivity levels in the residents and environment of Rongelap, Utirik and Bikini and to conduct a program of organized medical examinations on Rongelap and Utirik from the voluntary humanitarian medical services provided by members of the Brookhaven medical team during their visits to Bikini. If any further clarification is required, we shall be happy to provide it to you.

Sincerely,


James L. Liverman, Director
Division of Biomedical and
Environmental Research

cc: See attached list

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