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Medical Department

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William J. Stanley, Director  
U.S. Department of Energy  
Pacific Area Support Office  
P.O. Box 29939  
Honolulu, Hawaii 96820

Dear Bill,

I just returned from our last survey to the Marshalls and in the process of sorting through five weeks of mail, found your letter of June 11th concerning the RV Litkanur II registration, crew qualification and related matters. I was truly sorry to have missed you on the way out in May and on the way back in June. I always look forward to our visits. I'm sure that Harry has filled you in on our two discussions concerning the possibility of future logistic changes. In addition, I have just completed dictating the trip report for the last survey and will get a copy off to you as soon as possible.

In your letter of June 11th, your second paragraph, you note that DOE does have "... an excellent vessel for our current mission." I'm afraid, from the standpoint of the BNL medical team that we are unable to support that opinion. I understand the very grey area that the ship falls into from the standpoint of official Coast Guard regulations concerning certification of crew. I find it amazing in Commander Utara's letter to you of 1 June 1979 regarding the crew of the Litkanur II that Otterman, Coberly, Whitney, Goschen and Wrightman are listed as Able Seaman and Conway and Duckett as ordinary seaman wipers. As I understand it, and I would greatly appreciate it if you would correct me on this, I believe that Keith Coberly has his Masters papers. Is that not correct? I believe that it was the consensus of the group that met in Germantown on March 29th that the contract vessel comply with the Occupational Health and Safety Guide as published by Brookhaven National Laboratory under Marine Safety. I'm enclosing a copy of the first 5 pages of that document to refresh your memory. I thought that all members of that discussion group had a copy. On page 5 of that document under Responsibilities it states that the Department Chairman, in this case Dr. Cronkite, is responsible for insuring implementation of this guide. "Specifically they shall designate qualified and licensed Masters and a Marine Supervisor. I have discussed this matter with Dr. Cronkite and he has agreed completely that whoever is in control of the BNL medical

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survey ship shall be qualified and licensed as a Master. I then invite your attention to page 4 under Definitions, Section D Master (qualified and licensed) a person responsible for the operation of the vessel who has had experience with similar vessels on a body of water like that on which the individual expects to operate and who holds a validated operators or superior license. Those in essence are the requirements for BNL participation in a survey. There is another item in the letter of the 11th, namely, a letter dated 17 April 1979 to Mr. Otterman from Commander Utara. I quote at length from that letter because these are very important quotations and differentiations. "With reference to your letter of 13 April 1979, I find the Litkanur II, ON572028 an oceanographic research vessel as defined in Section 441 of Title 46 U.S. Code. An oceanographic research vessel is not considered a "passenger vessel," a "vessel carrying passengers" or a "passenger carrying vessel" under the provisions of the U.S. Merchant Vessel Inspection and Manning Laws. Additionally, an oceanographic research vessel shall not be deemed to be engaged in trade or commerce. However, all other regulations remain applicable. Now the most important paragraph of all in this entire letter is included in the next few lines "you are reminded that my determination is predicated upon the assurance that the Litkanur II is being employed exclusively in instruction in oceanography or linnology, or both, or exclusively in oceanographic research. I and my quotation of the letter at that point and I would like to make it perfectly clear that Brookhaven Medical Survey team is in no way involved in oceanographic or linnographic research, or that this ship is used exclusively in an oceanographic research program. The BNL medical program is basically a passenger carrying program, the passengers being the medical survey team and such patients and passengers as are deemed necessary for completion of our assigned mission by the Department of Energy. To label what we are doing "oceanographic work" is a complete misnomer. Therefore, under the intent of this letter I would say the Litkanur II could not be considered an oceanographic research vessel and would request that Commander Utara reevaluate the requirements for the operation and manning of this vessel. //

Bill, I understand the very difficult problems you've had dealing with these very fuzzy regulations relative to this ship and I wish that they could have been avoided. Hopefully some suitable alternative will be found in the near future. I would like to end on a happy note. Our last survey aboard the Litkanur, with a qualified Master aboard, Keith Coberly, was a marked improvement over our previous survey. There was still some discrepancies as I have noted in my trip report but basically the medical survey team and the ship's company worked together in close harmony and we greatly appreciated the support given us by Wayne Munk. I hope that future surveys will continue to function as smoothly.

I'd be very interested in your responses and U.S. Oceanographic's responses to the definition of the mission of this vessel and to the Coast Guard's reaction to the very distinct difference between its use as a support ship for a medical mission and oceanographic research.

Sincerely,



Hugh S. Pratt, M.D.  
Director, BNL-Marshall Islands Survey

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