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MEDICAL PROGRAM

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BROOKHAVEN NATIONAL LABORATORY

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Medical Department

October 29, 1979

Commander A.D. Utara, U.S. Coast Guard  
 Officer-in-Charge  
 Marine Inspection  
 P.O. Box 3160  
 Honolulu, Hawaii 96802

Dear Commander Utara:

Recently, Mr. Bill Stanley, Director of the Department of Energy, Pacific Area Support Office, gave me a copy of his letter to you dated September 18th, 1979 concerning the classification of the Department of Energy's vessel, Liktanur II - chartered from U.S. Oceanography (Enclosure 1).

As introduction, I am the Principal Investigator for the Brookhaven National Laboratory's Medical Survey and follow-up of the people of the Marshall Islands. Brookhaven National Laboratory is a nonprofit private laboratory, established by the Associated Universities, Inc., under contract in this project to the Department of Energy. Those nine universities are among the leading academic centers of the nation.

Our mission is to organize a medical survey of Majuro, Ebeye, Rongelap and Utirik, plus any other islands determined to be of interest to the Department of Energy.

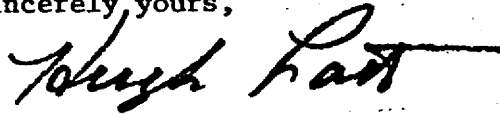
I was present at the initial negotiations with the U.S. Oceanography for the vessel, Egabrag, in San Diego a year ago. At that time, I explained in detail that the medical team included distinguished physicians from throughout the United States and other nations. In addition, we carry a team of Marshall Island medical personnel, including, usually, a Medical Officer, and a number of technicians and translators. The total number of passengers on the average medical survey is 17. I gave this figure to Mr. Otterman and Mr. Harry Brown during the negotiations and included the fact that, in addition, we usually picked up from two-to-four Marshallese patients as passengers on each one of our trips. Notwithstanding, I understand that during contract negotiations a clause was added limiting the berthing spaces for the scientific party to 12. On our trip during May and June of 1979, we had 18 additional Marshallese patients as passengers.

The first priority for ship usage, as stated by the Department of Energy Directors of the Marshall Island Studies, goes to the medical programs supported by Brookhaven National Laboratory. In essence, this ship is used much like a

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If I am wrong in my conclusions, I would appreciate your explanations of my faulty reasoning so that I can clarify this misunderstanding with the Directors of the Department of Energy.

Sincerely, yours,



Hugh S. Pratt, M.D.  
Principal Investigator, Marshall Island Study  
Brookhaven National Laboratory

bwa  
Enclosures 4

Cc:

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hospital ship, specializing in outpatient care, although we have had to deliver one child to a passenger on a trip between Uterik and Kwajalein. This would be classified as inpatient care by most medical facilities.

The problem then becomes your classification of this vessel. I would like to quote directly from your letter of 17 April, 1979 to Mr. C. Otterman concerning the mission of this vessel.

"With reference to your letter of 13 April, 1979, I find the Liktanur II, ON 572028, 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...you are reminded that my determination is predicated upon the assurance that the Liktanur II is being employed exclusively in instruction in oceanography or limnology or both, or exclusively in oceanographic research."

If you will study the log of this vessel, you will see that a very small percentage of its time is devoted to oceanography (by the most liberal definition), and none to limnology. The clarification of the classification of this vessel has become a very serious problem since the Holo Holo event and recent loss of another seaman (Enclosure 2).

Brookhaven National Laboratory has established its own "marine safety" guide (Enclosure 3) abstracted from applicable OSHA and Coast Guard directives.

As principal investigator and leader of the scientific party, their safety is my primary concern. I am enclosing a copy of my first trip report of the medical survey of January and February 1979 with a detailed report of the marine safety deficiencies discovered aboard Liktanur II (Enclosure 4).

Ship safety has been a lifelong interest of mine. I retired from the U.S. Navy in 1973, after 30 years of service. The first two years I served as an enlisted man, working with damage control. I then served nine years as a line officer and, subsequently, nineteen years as a medical officer. Much of that time, both as a line officer and as a medical officer, was spent aboard a number of ships, both large and small. As senior medical officer, I was an active member of the ship's safety committee. In addition, I served on a number of operational readiness safety inspection teams for the Atlantic Fleet.

I understand fully your problems with the very nonspecific directives covering a vessel of this size. However, as the Holo Holo tragedy so clearly demonstrates, the regulations need tightening. The Liktanur II is undoubtedly a passenger-carrying vessel and requires the added protection granted to such a vessel by rigid safety and crew qualifications.

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