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1255th AEC Meeting 12-18-56 AEC 944/4 - Proposed Test Plans for Calendar Year 1957 (pp. 19-50)

Under consideration by the Commission was a draft letter to the President requesting his approval of Operation PILGRIM and a press release on the test series. (See AEC 944/4.) 408727

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Mr. Strauss referred to the proposed underground shot scheduled for Operation PILGRIM and said that in a conversation with Mr. Bradbury earlier in the day, Mr. Bradbury had expressed concern about this shot. Mr. Bradbury had indicated that if an earthquake occurred within 24 hours after the underground shot were detonated, it would be impossible to correct the impression on the part of many people that the earthquake had been caused by the underground shot. Mr. Libby said he strongly suggested that the underground shot not be eliminated from the test series and said he was convinced there is no real danger that the shot would cause an earthquake. The knowledge gained from this shot alone, Mr. Libby said, would be of greater future importance than that gained from all other shots in the series. He said he did not believe this particular shot could be successfully carried out in the Pacific, because the coral structure of the atolls differs greatly from the soil structure in the U.S. Mr. Libby added that he believed seismologists should continue to be consulted about the possible effects of an underground shot, but that the letter to the President should not indicate any uncertainty about this shot being carried out. The Commissioners agreed to delete from the letter the word "tentative" as it refers to the underground shot.

The Commissioners then discussed and agreed upon several revisions to the press release on Operation PILGRIM. Mr. Strauss requested that a statement be included to the effect that high yield weapons of the type tested at Eniwetok Proving Grounds are not tested in Nevada. They also agreed that the reference to the use of captured balloons during the test operation should be deleted from the press release. The Commissioners also discussed the amount of press coverage which should be permitted.

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for Operation PILGRIM and agreed that the press release should indicate that there will be limited on-site press coverage.

They requested that recommendations on this subject be submitted later. Mr. Murray said he believed arrangements should be made for press attendance at as many shots as possible.

The Commissioners next discussed the problem of fallout as it relates to Operation PILGRIM and the radiological safety criteria for the Nevada Test Site. Mr. Murray suggested that rather than state in the public announcement that "Every effort will be made to limit fallout on populated areas around the test site so that radiation exposure to the public will not exceed 3.9 roentgens in any one year."; that the announcement state simply that fallout will be limited so that radiation exposure will not exceed 3.9 roentgens. General Starbird pointed out that unforeseen weather changes make it impossible to guarantee that fallout will not result in an exposure level exceeding 3.9 roentgens. Mr. Murray said he believed that this level need not be passed since testing could be halted before the 3.9 level is reached. In answer to a question by Mr. Strauss Dr. Dunning said it would be possible to exceed the 3.9 roentgen exposure level with fallout from a single shot. Mr. Strauss said he would oppose making any public statement on the fallout level for Operation PILGRIM which the Commission could not guarantee.

Mr. Murray then suggested that his proposed language not be included in the press release, but rather that it be inserted in the staff paper on Operation PILGRIM (see AEC 944/2). General Starbird pointed out that the staff paper concerning radiological criteria for Operation PILGRIM is AEC 141/33 - Radiological Criteria for the Nevada Test Site. Mr. McCool said that at

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Meeting 1246 on November 14, 1956, the Commission had approved the radiological safety criteria for gamma radiation set forth in paragraph 3 of AEC 141/33 with the understanding that Mr. Libby might establish the ten year limit at a lower level than the 10 roentgens referred to in paragraph 3b of AEC 141/33. Mr. Libby then stated that the ten year limit for radiation exposure should be 10 roentgens.

Mr. Murray suggested that sub-paragraph 3a of AEC 141/33, which states as the exposure limitation ". . . 3.9 roentgens for any one year;" be revised to read ". . . 3.9 roentgens for the anticipated test series." The Commissioners agreed to this revision of their previous decision on AEC 141/33.

The Commissioners also agreed to delete from the press release the reference to limiting fallout from Operation PILGRIM so that exposures will not exceed 3.9 roentgens. The staff was requested to prepare a draft response to any inquiries received concerning the consistency of AEC exposure criteria for Operation PILGRIM with the exposure criteria recommended by the National Academy of Sciences for the total population of the U.S.

After further discussion, the Commission:

- a. Approved, as revised, a letter to the President as set forth in AEC 944/4, regarding Operation PILGRIM;
- b. Approved, as revised, a press release as contained in AEC 944/4 regarding Operation PILGRIM;
- c. Noted that draft letters to the JCAE and the Nevada Congressmen similar to those in Appendices "I and "J", respectively, of AEC 944, as revised, will be prepared.