

APR 2 1957

Colonel Schnittke:

On March 28 in the company of Mr. Corman, of Holmes & Narver, Walter Gibbins, of UCRL, and a half dozen technical and scientific UCRL personnel, I visited an escort carrier at the San Francisco docks.

The carrier visited was under the operational control of the Navy and is being used in the service of transporting planes, trucks, etc. This visit was for the purpose of getting some general idea of the suitability of this type vessel for use as a diagnostic ship in connection with a possible Taongi operation. Although I am not in position to comment on the adequacy of the ship from the standpoint of purely diagnostic capabilities, I was very favorably impressed with many features, particularly from the standpoint of operation and providing service to the laboratories, the principal ones being:

- a. The large, flat, clear flight deck, approximately 600 feet in length and around 80 feet in width, with hold-down facilities and a wooden surface which would be very easy to work on and add to as required. A portion of it could easily be reserved for a limited number of helicopters for use in re-entry and damage survey investigations following a detonation.
- b. The large, clear space of the hanger deck, which I estimate to be a minimum of 50 feet in the clear and width approximately 425 feet in length with 18 feet of head room. It would be very easy to partition this space for offices, quarters, machine shops, and other uses for the scientific personnel.
- c. The two large elevators, which would be most useful in transporting materials to and from the hanger deck and if left open during periods when the ship was at anchor, would provide good ventilation throughout the hanger deck.
- d. The general simplicity of the ship, as compared to most military-type ships, is most important if we are to man the ship or arrange for its manning through MSTs. The engines are of a somewhat ancient vintage, but they are recipicating steam engines which are extremely dependable and easy to operate and maintain. Very little space is taken up with engines, boilers; and, although the ship is not particularly

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fast -- 11 to 12 knots cruising speed, with a maximum speed of 15 knots, it is entirely adequate for one round trip to Eniwetok every two years and for the limited cruising required while in service in the Pacific. Although the Navy requires a crew of 250, this ship, from purely navigation and operational standpoints, should be manned by not more than 60 people.

- e. There is nothing peculiar to this ship that could not be handled by merchant sailors not specially trained in the operation and maintenance of military vessels.
- f. There is in the vessel considerable additional space in addition to the hanger deck which is not used in the normal management of the vessel. Even with the 250-men crew now used in its operation, they are very generously quartered, and the Captain advised us that he has adequate space in various rooms for 300 to 400 troop-class passengers. These rooms, and the bunks provided, are such that they could be very easily and readily modified by light-weight partitions to provide adequate cabin-type space.

In prior preliminary conversations with Dr. G. W. Johnson and Mr. Gibbins, they indicated that they considered the Curtis a suitable ship for this service. The principal reason given by Gibbins is that the Curtis has a fire control system which is necessary for their certain number of stabilized platforms for holding instrumentation for viewing a shot. This is ~~not~~ ~~avail-~~ ~~able~~ on the carrier. My feeling is that although installation of this equipment might cost considerable originally (no feeling for the amount), other savings in the ultimate use of this ship as compared to modifications on the Curtis would be more than off-setting in favor of the carrier.

In regard to operation, it is our present feeling that we should have a contract with MSTS, either between AEC and MSTS or H&N and MSTS, to provide the sailing crew for this ship. This would be the crew that would leave with the ship from the states and return after completion of the trip. When not in use while on berth at San Francisco, only a skeleton standby crew would be required. The crew would be augmented at the proving ground by "passengers", including the UCRL people and H&N technicians, mechanics, etc., in support of UCRL as well as the housekeeping organization to take care of our own and UCRL personnel.

At the present time we feel that any modifications on the ship stateside should be A-Eed by H&N and accomplished by commercial

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ship yards on the West Coast. These modifications, of course, would have to be submitted by H&N personnel while at the forward area.

I personally feel that the following might be considered major disadvantages to the carrier as compared with more elaborate Navy facilities, i.e. the Curtis:

1. Lack of fire control system -- this could be added.
2. Lack of adequate cabin space. This could be added and no doubt it would be necessary to provide some dehumidifying equipment for cabin space and possibly shop space (probably also necessary on the Curtis).
3. The wooden hanger deck and the numerous hold-downs, etc. might be difficult to protect against contamination or to clean following accidental contamination. I believe this is something that can be worked out.

Holmes & Narver is continuing to investigate the most desirable ways and means of supporting UCRL on any diagnostic ship, specifically the Curtis and the carrier. Gibbins is arranging to furnish H&N direct a set of plans of both ships. H&N will contact MSTS people on the West Coast in regard to methods for arranging for a crew to sail the ship. They will also investigate the best procedures for arranging for modifications of the ship on the West Coast. UCRL is going to furnish us (and H&N) a paper which will include the support requirements required in supporting a diagnostic ship. UCRL is also inspecting the Curtis with a view of comparing the two ships, and possibly our people will do the same thing before the week is out. UCRL is planning on digging into the requirement of stabilized platforms and the best method of procuring these; possibly the Navy could furnish this equipment free and we pay for installation.

Before definite request is made to the Task Force or anyone else for transfer of the ship, many facets will have to be investigated, and we will furnish you a report before any final steps are taken. It is not our intention to enter into any formal agreements for the ship until after the decision has been made regarding the use of Taongi.

*James E. Reeves*  
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