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AEC 483/33

November 18, 1952

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ATOMIC ENERGY COMMISSION

LETTER TO J. EDGAR HOOVER - OPERATION IVY

Note by the Secretary

The attached letter to Mr. J. Edgar Hoover is circulated for the information of the Commission.

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ABSTRACT

LETTER TO J. EDGAR HOOVER - OPERATION IVY

1. Mr. Enno Hobbing, Washington representative of Time and Mr. Clay Blair Jr. of Life Magazine called representatives of the AEC and DOD respectively on October 31 and stated the exact time of the detonation of MIKE. They also indicated that they knew the device was thermonuclear.
2. It is requested that the FBI investigate the sources of this information and ascertain whether a violation of the Atomic Energy Act or federal statutes is involved.

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UNITED STATES
ATOMIC ENERGY COMMISSION
WASHINGTON 25, D. C.

November 14, 1952

Honorable J. Edgar Hoover, Director
Federal Bureau of Investigation
U. S. Department of Justice
Washington, D. C.

Dear Mr. Hoover:

Transmitted herewith are copies of memoranda by members of the Atomic Energy Commission Washington staff concerning telephone calls on October 31, 1952 from Clay Blair, Jr., Washington correspondent of Life Magazine, and Enno Hobbing, Washington correspondent of Time.

It is observed that the memorandum on the Hobbing call states that Hobbing phoned about 4:15 p.m., on October 31 and in the course of the call stated: "We understand the H-bomb has just been set off." The memorandum on the Blair call reports that Andrew Berding, Department of Defense Director of Public Information, advised at 4:50 p.m. October 31, that he had just had a phone conversation with Berding,* in the course of which Berding* asserted that Life has positive knowledge that the Atomic Energy Commission and the Department of Defense had exploded an H-bomb in the Pacific "three hours ago, at 2:15."

For your information, a thermonuclear device was detonated at Eniwetok at 2:15 p.m., Washington time, October 31, 1952.

The exact time of detonation of such test device (that is, accuracy within one minute) is secret information affecting the national defense. The fact that the detonation involved a thermonuclear device is "restricted data" under the Atomic Energy Act, of a Secret classification. The Atomic Energy Commission and Department of Defense releases forwarded herewith constitute the sole information on the current tests which presently is authorized for public dissemination.

* Secretariat note - should be Blair

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It is requested that the Federal Bureau of Investigation institute investigation for the purpose of determining the source of the Time - Life information and ascertaining whether a violation of the Atomic Energy Act or federal statutes is involved.

For your assistance in inquiring into this matter, and possible bearing on the case, you are advised that a report has been received to the effect that, apparently through administrative error on the part of elements of JTF 132, a radio message reflecting the time of the detonation (but not disclosing its thermonuclear character) was transmitted as unclassified (in the clear) from USS Shank at the Eniwetok test site to CINCPAC, Honolulu, and other Department of Defense installations, for the purpose of alerting certain Air Force components performing functions of interest to the long range detection program. This message was reportedly sent by the USS Shank at 2:20 p.m., Washington time, October 31, and was thereafter radio-relayed by CINCPAC at 5:22 p.m. Washington time, October 31, as unclassified (in the clear) to other Department of Defense installations. For your assistance, it is also noted that within the last few months, comments have appeared in the Alsops' columns (which as you know are now under investigation by your agency) to the effect that a thermonuclear device was to be detonated in the current Eniwetok tests.

Sincerely yours,

/s/

Gordon Dean
Chairman

Enclosures:

Memo fm Salisbury dtd 10/31/52
Memo fm Thompson dtd 10/31/52
AEC, DOD release dtd 9/9/52 & 2/18/52*

*Secretariat Note: Not attached - on file in the Office of the Secretary.

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UNITED STATES
ATOMIC ENERGY COMMISSION
WASHINGTON 25, D. C.

October 31, 1952

Hobbing of Time phoned the AEC Public Information Service (Shelby Thompson) at 4:15 p.m. (EST). Friday, October 31, 1952. The following conversation took place.

Hobbing: Is this the big day?

Thompson: Why don't you tell me? What are you talking about?

Hobbing: We understand the H-bomb has just been set off.

Thompson: We have a standard policy of no comment about weapons tests. We haven't anything to say in that field.

Hobbing: Aren't you getting out a release, don't you usually issue releases after you have made a shot?

Thompson: We have at times issued releases or statements after a shot at Nevada. We have never followed such procedure on tests at Eniwetok.

Hobbing: Don't you have any releases coming out there this afternoon?

Thompson: I don't know offhand. I'll have to check.

Hobbing: I mean about the H-bomb.

Thompson: No.

/s/ Shelby Thompson
Chief, Public Information
Service, AEC

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UNITED STATES
ATOMIC ENERGY COMMISSION
WASHINGTON 25, D. C.

October 31, 1952

At 4:50 this afternoon I was called by Andy Berding, the Director of Public Information, Department of Defense. He said he wanted me to know of a telephone conversation he had just had with Clay Blair, Jr., of Life magazine.

Berding said that Blair had said that Life had positive knowledge that the AEC and Department of Defense had exploded an H-bomb in the Pacific "three hours ago, at 2:15", and asked if DOD had any comment. Berding replied that he didn't know anything about it and had nothing to say. Blair repeated that Life had positive confirmation, and asked that the magazine be notified at once when pictures were available.

Morse Salisbury
Director of Information Services
AEO