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25 February 1960

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NOTE TO GENERAL STARBIRD

THRU Colonel Hood Captain Houston

Test Branch

SUBJECT: SAC PLANS TO IMPACT ICBM'S AT ENIWETOK (\cup)

On Wednesday, February 24th, I visited the Air Force Strategic Missiles Office in the Pentagon and talked to Major McDonald about SAC plans to use Eniwetok Atoll as a target for Atlas missiles.

Major McDonald indicated that their plans are still formative but STL is studying the problem of safety to personnel at Eniwetok and has found that moving the target point from Mack Tower westward to a point located at 11°34'30" north and 162°11'30" east would result in a kill probability of only $3/10^7$. In order to benefit by deeper water, the target point might

A plot of Atlas impacts to date showed that a great majority were within the one mile circle while the greatest error in deflection was within 2 missiles would approach Eniwetok Atoll from 75°True so deflection errors nautical miles to approach FRED island. Major McDonald felt that such a small risk would certainly be acceptable and use of Bikini Atoll need no longer be considered. I cautioned him that acceptance where civilians are employed would be more difficult than were only military personnel present and that a new type of risk is harder to sell than one we face daily and learn to accept -- therefore, it would be best not to finalize plans on the assumption that AEC would accept these plans. I reminded him that we had agreed to let PMR use Eniwetok only for a communications station and a monitoring station for hydrophones leading to an impact area hundreds of miles away.

STL is to brief the Air Staff on their evaluation of plans to fire 5 missiles into this area - 3 to be air bursts and 2 surface impacts. When these plans are accepted in the Pentagon, the approval of the AEC would be requested. I asked that they keep us informed as plans developed to prevent a last minute disruption of plans as might occur should our first knowledge of SAC's chosen program reach us through a formal letter to the AEC via the MLC proposing a program which we could not accept.

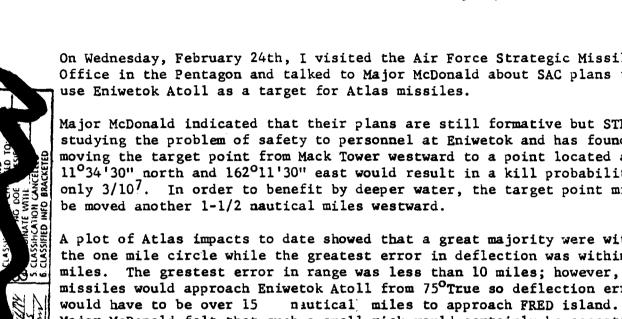
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