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UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA

CROCKER LABORATORY
BERKELEY 4, CALIFORNIA

JGH-56-110
November 1, 1956

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Dr. Charles L. Dunham, Director
Division of Biology and Medicine
U. S. Atomic Energy Commission
Washington 25, D. C.

Dear Chuck:

A little over two weeks ago Dr. Nathaniel Berlin of the Special Weapons Project dropped in to see me and asked for an evaluation of the hazards concerned with the accidental release of a plutonium bomb.

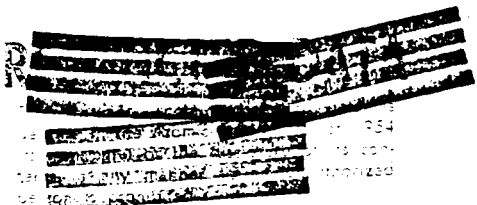
He asked me to read two reports, LA-1981 and LA-2079. The Information Division only had the first report available by Wright Langham and his group. This report was somewhat incomplete. Last week I was at Oak Ridge attending a meeting of the Health Physics group, and Langham was present. I mentioned the above to him, and he said the preliminary report was prepared in great haste, and he knew it was not as complete as it should have been. These circumstances were not of his own making, but rather due to questions that were being asked at higher echelons. Langham went on further to say that La-2079 was a more complete report. Recently I went over the two reports and sent to Berlin an evaluation of my opinions concerning the accidental release of this type of nuclear device. To avoid duplication of distribution of classified material I am not sending a copy of my report written to Berlin to you, but it will be available at his office if you care to see it. In essence, I said I felt that the hazards involved were not large enough to justify making use of this particular device, and that the calculated risk involved was small. The principal concern would be prompt immobilization of the plutonium by use of fire-hoses and other conventional methods of containing alpha active material.

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I have known Langham personally for the past 14 years, and I feel he is a sound and conservative individual with good judgment. Actually, I discussed the matter very briefly with him. My principal concern was to obtain the second report.

The reason I bring this to your attention is that if there are any questions asked of you about this matter, you will understand that the opinions which I gave to Dr. Berlin were based on the two manuscripts and not on any detailed discussion between Langham and myself.

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Sincerely,
JGH
J. G. Hamilton, M.D.
Director, Crocker Laboratory

JGH:gw
Copy to:
1/LA - Dr. Charles Dunham, AEC
2/LA - File

