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75th AEC-MLC 4. Timing of Operation CASTLE

Meeting
12-18-52

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Mr. Dean and General Fields pointed out that for technical reasons it would probably be necessary to postpone Operation CASTLE from the fall of 1953 until early 1954. Postponing the test of an [redacted] until early 1954 would make it possible to test three deliverable megaton or higher thermonuclear weapons. If the postponement is approved, Los Alamos will develop three different thermonuclear weapons which would give us a greater certainty of having a deliverable weapon than if one weapon is backed in the fall to the exclusion of the other two. This would be the case if the test must be held in late 1953. General Fields added that the likelihood of having a deliverable thermonuclear weapon early in 1954 is greater, in his opinion, if three different types are developed simultaneously and tested in early 1954 than if one weapon is developed exclusively and tested in 1953. The alternate types of devices to be tested and the various problems in their development were discussed.

General Bunker asked why it would not be possible to test one device in the fall and the other two in early 1954. Captain Hayward said that the only device which will possibly be ready in anything approaching deliverable form by the fall of 1953 would be the [redacted] which LASL at this time feels has the least probability of success of the alternate courses. If the [redacted] is backed to the exclusion of the others it would mean a delay of six months before the other types could be tested. An additional reason for not testing a deliverable form of the [redacted] in late 1953 is the desirability of utilizing the results of Operation UPSHOT in the development of these weapons.

[Redacted vertical text]

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Mr. LeBaron stated that a requirement for an emergency capability for the [REDACTED] already existed. The development of airplanes to carry this weapon is now under way. Mr. Dean said that although AEC is still carrying out the development of an emergency capability for the [REDACTED] other approaches toward deliverable thermonuclear weapons are being developed at the same time.

There followed a discussion of the support problems resulting from a postponement of the test. These problems include the deployment of elements of the task force. Admiral Wright stated that it might be necessary to withdraw certain of the Naval elements. Mr. Zuckert pointed out that if the task force is disbanded and another formed at a later date it could very well result in a further delay of the test. He stated that, in his opinion, the support elements of the test must not become the over-riding consideration. Admiral Wright said that it would be necessary for the Navy to have a decision in the near future in order that it might plan for this eventual postponement. Mr. Dean suggested that the matter of timing of CASTLE could not be settled at this session and that, on an interim basis, Admiral Wright might tell the Navy that the Commission has serious doubts that the test can be held in the fall of 1953.

It was agreed to meet again on December 23 to consider this problem further.

[REDACTED]

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