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# Office Memorandum • UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT

400761

TO : General Starbird

THRU : Colonel Hood

FROM : CDR P. F. Bankhardt, USN  
Acting Chief, Test Branch

DATE: 30 Dec 59

SUBJECT: PUBLIC ANNOUNCEMENT OF EPG PHASE-DOWN

Reference Colonel Hood's request received December 29th from General Hertford on the desirability of making a public statement on the status of EPG:

- A. At Tab A is the ALOO-proposed announcement dated Sept. 10, 1959.
- B. At Tab B is DMA memo to DIS, dated October 8th which encloses a revised, shorter version prepared by Reports and Test which would have been released October 21st, except that General Loper objected to any release on this subject. (ALOO was informed by memorandum on November 18th, prepared by Reports Branch.)
- C. At Tab C is a combined coverage of test site readiness and COWBOY-PEACOCK-LOLLIPOP. Such a combined release might be a logical way to cover these subjects. However, State has consistently objected to any release on PEACOCK and LOLLIPOP. Therefore, including anything which we want to get out on EPG might also subject it to indefinite delay.
- D. At Tab D is an announcement consisting of the last 3 paragraphs of Tab C with the first sentence changed. If it is imperative to get something out, this may be all we should say.
- E. Test is prepared to coordinate Tab C with State and DoD if you so desire, or to coordinate Tab D with General Loper only, if you desire to use this shorter release.

Attachments:

- Tab A - ALO proposed announcement (4.2 - Personnel - EPG file)
- Tab B - DMA memo to DIS dtd 10/8/59
- Tab C - Combined proposed release
- Tab D - Short version, proposed release

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 AUTHORITY: DOE/SI-20  
 BY F. B. SECURITY DEPT  
 H. B. Latt 6/14/94  
 R. Carpenter 6-15-94

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DATE  
BY  
H.P.D. Lt 6/14/94

On December 29, 1959 President Eisenhower announced that the U.S. would not extend the moratorium on nuclear weapons tests, but before any resumption of testing, we would announce to the world our intention to do so.

As a result, inquiries have been received regarding our readiness to resume testing and steps being taken to improve that readiness. ~~During the moratorium, those nations who questioned the support the AEC was giving to the test ban.~~ It, therefore, is appropriate that the AEC clarify its position on test readiness.

Throughout the test moratorium the Commission followed the national policy by supporting the discontinuance of weapons development testing while maintaining its Eniwetok Proving Ground and Nevada Test Site in a stand-by status in order that the U.S. could resume testing and not be outstripped in weapons development should the Soviets again start testing.

The Commission concentrated efforts on determination of detectability of nuclear tests in order that an enforceable test ban agreement could be reached. To accomplish this, a series of tests was planned, as recommended by the Berkner Panel report, to check the feasibility of hiding underground nuclear detonations through reducing, or "decoupling", the seismic impulse they produce. A series of conventional high explosive tests is now being conducted at Winnfield, Louisiana. Initial data (from very low yield HE shots) indicate that

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the decoupling factor is greater than 10. These yields will be increased to a maximum of 5 tons.

The Berkner Panel report also recommended underground nuclear tests in various media to complete the investigation of detection factors. The AEC has chosen a location within the Nevada Test Site where a deep hole is being dug in granite rock in preparation for emplacement of one of the recommended nuclear detection shots, should its firing be approved. The Commission is also searching for a suitable location in which to fire a recommended underground nuclear shot in a large cavern to measure resulting decoupling factors in the event a decision is made to fire such a shot.

Each series of nuclear tests, whether at the EPG or the NTS has required a build-up of construction, support and scientific personnel and equipment. At the end of each series it has been necessary to return most of the personnel to their normal assignments and preserve, or otherwise dispose of, the assembled equipment.

This cut-back has been somewhat more thorough at EPG since Operation HARDTACK. Facilities there have now been placed on a maintenance stand-by basis. Such equipment as can be used elsewhere has been reassigned while other equipment has been mothballed to protect it from the corrosive atmosphere. All activity is being concentrated on Eniwetok and Japtan Islands. By maintaining the Proving Ground under contract, it has been possible to relieve most of the military personnel from duty there during this maintenance period.

→ Some 400 contractor employees will be required to keep the

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proving ground in this status for the AEC.

Should a decision be made to resume testing at the Eniwetok Proving Ground, the time necessary to build up and commence testing would be largely dependent upon the extent of the tests to be conducted, as in previous operations.

At the Nevada Test Site, weapons test facilities are also being maintained in a stand-by status. However, underground tests require a long lead time for digging holes and tunnels in which shots would be fired. Therefore, some digging has continued in order that underground testing could be resumed there within a few months of a decision to do so.

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~~The Atomic Energy Commission announced that~~ Facilities at the Eniwetok Proving Ground have been placed on a maintenance stand-by status. Such equipment as can be used elsewhere has been reassigned while other equipment has been mothballed to protect it from the corrosive atmosphere. All activity is being concentrated on Eniwetok and Japtan Islands. By maintaining the Proving Ground under contract, it has been possible to relieve most of the military personnel from duty there during this maintenance period. Some 400 contractor employees will be required to keep the proving ground in this status for the AEC.

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