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1378th AEC Meeting 5-28-58
5. Letter to the President Regarding Project MILIRACE and Additional Shots for Operation HARDTACK

General Starbird discussed with the Commissioners the question of including additional shots in Operation HARDTACK. Mr. Floberg commented that Mr. Libby had calculated that approximately eight megatons of fission yield would be contributed to the atmosphere by the shots already approved for operation HARDTACK. General Starbird replied that the total figures for the amount of fission that would be spread world-wide was now somewhat higher than Mr. Libby's original calculations.

General Starbird then reviewed the additional shots to be included in HARDTACK and said their contribution to the atmosphere of fallout would not be significant. However, if one of the contingency shots now being considered for HARDTACK is included, there might necessarily be an increase in Mr. Libby's calculations on fallout from the test.

During the preceding discussion, Col. Sherrill left the meeting briefly.

Mr. Potts said he believed Mr. Libby's original calculations included figures on the proposed contingency shot and expressed surprise that there was a considerable increase in the estimated figures on HARDTACK fallout.

At this point, Mr. Graham left the meeting briefly.

Referring to a chart, General Starbird explained in detail the size of the proposed additional shots and contingency shots as well as the estimated world-wide fallout from these shots. He

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also noted the total fallout from these shots in relation to Mr. Libby's calculations.

Mr. Floberg questioned whether the President would approve the additional shots in view of his reported concern about the number of weapons and amount of fallout when the HARDTACK program was originally submitted for approval. Mr. Vance commented that in view of the present international climate with respect to nuclear weapons tests, he did not believe the President would question inclusion of additional shots since HARDTACK might be the last test series.

General Starbird pointed out that the letter to the President would also request his approval of Project MILLRACE to be conducted at the Nevada Test Site during the fall of 1958. However, if MILLRACE were not to be approved, an additional shot and a one-point detonation test shot would be requested for HARDTACK in lieu of MILLRACE.

Mr. Graham said an effort should be made to obtain approval of the underground shot. However, in going to the President regarding additional shots for HARDTACK, there should be a final answer on the total fission product that would be contributed to the atmosphere by the shots already approved and now being requested for HARDTACK. General Starbird said this total figure, including a contingency shot, would be 8.4 megatons.

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In response to a comment by Mr. Graham, General Starbird said use of clean weapons for the Johnston Island shots would not provide the data needed by the DOD.

At this point, Mr. Strauss entered the meeting.

Mr. Vance briefly reviewed for Mr. Strauss the proposal that a letter be sent to the President requesting approval of Project MILLRACE and an additional two shots and one contingency shot for Operation HARDTACK. General Starbird repeated that if MILLRACE were not approved, two additional shots would be included in HARDTACK in lieu of MILLRACE.

In response to a comment by Mr. Graham on the importance of the underground shot in MILLRACE, Mr. Strauss said he had provided the President a copy of the GAC recommendation regarding underground shots. He observed, however, that the recommendation does not now have unanimous GAC support.

The Commissioners requested that the letter to the President be circulated for their review prior to dispatch and that DOD concurrence in the proposal also be obtained.

After discussion, the Commission:

Approved for transmittal to the President a letter requesting approval of additional shots for Operation HARDTACK as well as approval for Project MILLRACE.

At this point, other members of the staff entered the meeting.

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