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STATEMENT BY THE ATOMIC ENERGY COMMISSION

Progress continues to be made in the Atomic Energy Commission's program of developing nuclear weapons having maximum effect in the immediate area of the target but with greatly reduced widespread radiological fallout.

Such weapons will become part of the United States stockpile of nuclear weapons for various military applications.

The efforts of scientists in the Commission's weapons laboratories are being directed toward the development of such cleaner weapons and the success thus far achieved has convinced us that widespread hazard from fallout is not a necessary complement to the employment of large nuclear weapons.

Laboratory and testing activities have confirmed the important objectives which were stated by the President at his news conference on April 25, 1956, when he stated that this country's testing program was aimed at the development of a variety of weapons to serve a wide range of military uses including defense against air attack. On that occasion he stated that there also was the objective of making weapons with reduced fallout.

Chairman Lewis L. Strauss of the AEC, on July 19, 1956, following his return from the REDWING test series at the Eniwetok Proving Grounds, said that "many factors, including operational ones, make it possible to localize to an

(more)

extent not heretofore appreciated the fallout effect of nuclear explosions."

Dr. Willard F. Libby, member of the Commission, informed the American Association for the Advancement of Science on October 12, 1956, that particular attention was given in the REDWING test series to the problem of large-scale fallout.

Dr. Libby said:

"A major effort was made to produce a megaton range weapon with an inherently smaller amount of fallout for a given energy release. This effort was successful."

President Eisenhower stated on October 24, 1956, that "the most recent tests enable us to harness and discipline our weapons more precisely and effectively -- drastically reducing their fallout and making them more easy to concentrate, if ever used, upon military objectives. Further progress along this line is confidently expected..."

The Commission's 21st Semi-Annual Report to the Congress, covering the period July-December, 1956, also stated: "Operation Redwing gave important information relating to developing means of reducing fallout from weapons firing."

As recently as May 21, 1957, Commissioner Libby, speaking before the American Society of Military Engineers, said that as result of weapons development and tests, "the amount of radioactive fallout per megaton of explosive power is very greatly reduced."

He added:

"I believe this is a most important development because it would minimize the potential health hazards to those who are far from the scene of battle if nuclear weapons are used."

The Commission is encouraged by the progress made in the development of weapons having reduced radiological fallout and intends to continue its efforts in this direction.

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