

memorandum

ES - 90-00684

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Date: July 13, 1990

SECRETARIAL ACTION REQUESTED BY: 7/20/90

Orig. Office: EH-40:Jones:3-3889

Transmittal: ACTION: Secretary's Signature

To: The Secretary *CPJ E/2*

Through: Under Secretary *J.C. [unclear] 7/31/90*

Issue: Transfer of the Department of Energy's (DOE) activities and funds relating to the Rongelap program from the Office of Defense Programs to the new Office of Health, as recommended by the Secretarial Panel for the Evaluation of Epidemiologic Research Activities (SPEERA).

Timing: Expeditious response needed due to the April date of Chairman Ron De Lugo's letter.

Discussion: SPEERA recommended the transfer of management responsibility for the Rongelap program to the Office of Health, which "would service as the single Departmental voice on all Rongelap issues" (SPEERA Report, page 15).

The attached letter responds to Chairman De Lugo's letter inquiring about pending changes at DOE in the management of the Rongelap program. It does not provide detailed responses to the specific questions submitted by Chairman De Lugo, but directs that a thorough review of historical documents in our possession will be completed and the Office of Health will respond fully by September 15, 1990. It further identifies that the Department is considering an unsolicited historical review and that the Office of Health will provide follow-up information on this initiative also.

The attached correspondence has no relation to the Naval Nuclear Propulsion Program. Naval Reactors concurrence is not required.

Recommendation: Sign the attached letter to Chairman De Lugo.

Peter N. Brush
Peter N. Brush
Acting Assistant Secretary
Environment, Safety and Health

Attachment

Concurrence: CP-1 Brown 7/11/90 DP-1 Tuck 7/9/90 GC-1 Wakefield 7/12/90

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CC DeLugo RD 7-00087-



The Secretary of Energy
Washington, DC 20585

August 3, 1990

The Honorable Ron De Lugo
Chairman, Subcommittee on Insular
and International Affairs
Committee on Interior
and Insular Affairs
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Mr. Chairman:

Thank you for your letter of April 20, 1990, concerning the Department's management of affairs affecting Rongelap Atoll.

I share your continued interest in Rongelap Island and the health of Rongelap people. As indicated in my June 8, 1990, letter to you, I am transferring the management of the Department's Rongelap activities from the Office of Defense Programs to a new Office of Health. Under the Assistant Secretary for Environment, Safety and Health, this new office will consolidate and augment the Department's expertise in health physics, epidemiology, occupational medicine and health protection and assessment in one organization.

Your letter requested that we provide certain documents for your subcommittee's consideration. I have directed that a thorough search be made of the Department's records. The Office of Health will provide any documents in their possession that are responsive to your request by September 15, 1990. It is important to focus on the current organizational changes at the Department that will affect the future of the Department's Rongelap activities. I have directed that the Office of Health take an active role in the management and oversight of these activities serving the Rongelap people and keep me fully informed of its progress. In addition, the Department has requested the National Academy of Sciences through its National Research Council to take a fresh and independent look at our Rongelap program. Finally, I am informed that the Office of Health is considering a recent unsolicited proposal to prepare an oral history on the whole Marshall Islands program. Such a historical review might prove helpful in compiling a comprehensive chronological perspective of the Department and its predecessors.

I look forward to an aggressive and forward looking program in support of the Rongelap people through the Department's Office of Health and appreciate your sustained interest and support of this initiative.

Sincerely,


James D. Watkins
Admiral, U.S. Navy (Retired)

cc: The Honorable Robert J. Lagomarsino
Ranking Minority Member