

have a significant effect on any other subsystem in the spacecraft. Further, the mission launch date depends on every component of the spacecraft; schedule charts and management controls must be established on a uniform basis for all subsystems. Only by close and intimate working relations can such coordination be assured. . . .”<sup>5</sup>

Finger saw the AEC laboratories as “large technical organizations that have deep competence in most of the disciplines involved in this work and also have test equipment that can be applied. . . in the isotope development program as a means of strengthening our management in this rapidly expanding area.” In keeping with NASA and AEC policies of promoting the development of broad industrial competence, however, industry would be called upon and relied on “to develop and provide the isotope power systems that will be needed for mission application and. . . for development of advanced capabilities in this area.”<sup>6</sup>

A major feature of the decentralization of responsibilities was the delegation of technical direction of AEC’s isotope power supply development program to Sandia Corporation of Albuquerque, New Mexico—an AEC-affiliated laboratory that already had responsibility for testing in the SNAP safety work. Although it had limited experience with isotope heat sources, Sandia was considered to have extensive system analysis experience and the most comprehensive capability for and understanding of space system development in the AEC. Also considered in the selection of Sandia was the importance of tying the aerospace safety work closely to the power system design and development work. Finger held that Sandia’s safety work “defines design conditions and should be incorporated as a direct part of the system design and development activity.”<sup>7</sup>

Finger recalled that he especially saw the importance of making it clear that the technology was no longer the province of one organization. Moreover, the new and complex systems that came on line and used RTGs after 1965 required very strong technical expertise— the kind that could be best supplied by laboratory technical competence and no longer could be delivered by the central general manager of a program. He stressed his conviction that overall responsibility must devolve on the *mission* agency—the organization responsible for integrating all the components and subsystems, including the RTGs, into a final mission system. “If I had one problem from the beginning,” he said