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October 19, 1973

SECY-74-169

COPY NO. 31

POLICY SESSION ITEM

SUMMARY SHEET

Subject: DECLASSIFICATION OF LASER-FUSION INFORMATION

Purpose: To consider the appropriate action to take following the refusal of the DOD to concur in the declassifications listed in the proposed "Laser-Fusion Classification Guide," CG-LF-2.

Discussion: On June 21, 1973, the Commission approved SECY-3137 which recommended the declassification of 2 and 3-D calculations of layered laser-fusion pellets (targets) and experiments with these pellets subject to certain conditions and the adoption of a new laser-fusion classification guide, CG-LF-2.

[redacted]

On July 2, 1973, a letter was sent to Deputy Secretary of Defense William Clements seeking DOD comments on the classifications recommended in SECY-3137. By letter of August 7, 1973, Secretary Clements replied that the DOD felt that the proposed declassification is premature.

A request for comments on the DOD response was sent to the Committee of Senior Reviewers and others.

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Senior Reviewers Dr. James S. Kane, Dr. J. Carson Mark, and Mr. Robert W. Henderson, while they do not agree with the DOD stand, feel that the AEC is not justified in proceeding with the proposed declassification and the adoption of the proposed new "Laser-Fusion Classification Guide," CG-LF-2, in view of the DOD opposition.

Senior Reviewer Dr. Edward C. Creutz and CTR Director Dr. Robert L. Hirsch totally disagree with the DOD position and feel that any delay in the adoption of new declassification rules will unnecessarily hamper the advancement of TN power generation theory and technology.

LLL Associate Director, Dr. A. Carl Haussmann supported by LLL Director Dr. Roger E. Batzel concur in the DOD position.

Recommendation: That the Commission maintain the present classification rules for laser-fusion information for approximately six to eight months while the staff studies the experimental and theoretical progress made in laser-fusion technology. During this time, the staff is to attempt to formulate a laser-fusion classification policy acceptable to both the AEC and DOD.

Coordination: The Divisions of International Security Affairs, Military Application, Security, and the Office of Planning and Analysis concur in this paper. The Office of the General Counsel has no legal objection.

Non-Concurrences: The comments of the Division of Controlled Thermonuclear Research are enclosed.

[redacted]

[redacted]

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Staff Papers - SECY-Secy

Chronology of Previous Commission Actions: SECY-3137, "Declassification of Laser-Fusion Information," dated June 6, 1973, was approved by the Commission at Policy Session 107 on June 21, 1973.

Scheduling: Consideration at an early Policy Session.

General Manager

Contact:
C. L. Marshall
Ext. 3521

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ATOMIC ENERGY COMMISSION

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DECLASSIFICATION OF LASER-FUSION INFORMATION [redacted]

Report to the General Manager
by the Director of Classification

THE PROBLEM

1. To consider the response to the DOD opposition to the declassification of certain laser-fusion information and the adoption of a new laser-fusion classification guide.

BACKGROUND

2. At Policy Session 107, June 21, 1973, the Commission approved the recommendations in SECY-3137 concerning the declassification of certain information relating to laser-fusion technology and the adoption of a new laser-fusion classification guide, CG-LF-2.

3. On July 2, 1973, a letter was sent to the Deputy Secretary of Defense, William Clements, then Acting Secretary of Defense, asking for DOD approval of the declassification actions recommended in SECY-3137. By letter of August 7, 1973, Secretary Clements replied that the DOD feels "that further declassification of laser-fusion information as proposed is premature" and "opens a direct line to the frontier of advanced thinking in the U.S. nuclear weapons program."

DISCUSSION

4. The DOD believes that the release of additional information as proposed in CG-LF-2 would be of marginal help to the laser-fusion program until some experiments are performed which would establish experimentally a favorable basis for believing that useful electric power can eventually be obtained from laser-fusion. Secretary Clements also said, however, that technically unsound papers coming from outside the AEC which violate the letter of classification policy but did not endanger classified weapon concepts could be ignored.

5. On August 13, 1973, a request for comments on the DOD response was sent to the Committee of Senior Reviewers and others. The comments of the Senior Reviewers are summarized below.

a. Deleted

DOE b(3)

[redacted]

[redacted]

CLASSIFIED BY:

Raymond A. Carpenter
Division of Classification, USAEC HQ

[redacted]

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DOE b(3)

Also, he thinks that Secretary Clements' stand that it is unlikely to declassify more information without [illegible]

[illegible] "[illegible] AEC's labs and grads [illegible]" [illegible] theory and [illegible] "[illegible] 'real' [illegible] [illegible]." Also, Dr. Kane replied, that a compromise could be applied the classify guidance to AEC contractors since [illegible] publications from within the AEC community could divulge weapons code capabilities "from which a great deal of weapons-related information can be inferred." At the same time apply our liberal classification policy to the general public. He believes "that such a policy would solve most of our problems with the 'outside' community, yet give maximum protection against the release of weapons-related information."

d. Dr. J. Carson Mark, LASL, points out what he believes to be some weaknesses in Secretary Clements' letter but at the same time seems to agree with Dr. Kane in that the final policy with regard to laser-fusion will be a matter of judgment. In addition, Dr. Mark presents some suggestions for interim consideration. These are that the fact of, and reasons for, possible interest in structured targets and the analytical treatment (as opposed to experimental or computer simulation studies) of the behavior of such targets under symmetric irradiation by lasers be declassified.

[redacted]

[redacted]

6. In addition to the Senior Scientists, we have interviewed the scientists [illegible] the following.

a. [illegible]

[illegible]

Deleted

DOE b(3)

[illegible] Also, the letter [illegible] that the proposal to liberalize AEC's classification policy "is in contrast to the Commission's policy with regard to weapon design concepts in the past."

b. Dr. Carl Haussmann, Associate Director, LLL, says that the DOD response appears quite logical and that "they are saying 'go slow' while the AEC is saying 'go fast'". He also says he does not feel that the DOD position is unreasonable and the "AEC should not force the issue."

7. Five alternatives suggest themselves for consideration by the Commission:

1. Inform the DOD that the AEC considers the proposed declassification to be necessary and that the AEC is implementing it without DOD concurrence.
2. Write another letter to the DOD restating the AEC arguments for the declassification and requesting DOD reconsideration.

[redacted]

3. Respond to the DOD position by proposing something less than the full declassification action recommended in SECY-3137. Specifically, [illegible] the lack of and reasons for possible interest in [illegible] analysis [illegible] [illegible] [illegible]

[redacted]

11. Continuing the present classification [illegible]

[illegible]

[illegible]

[

the judgment of the Director [illegible]

technically [illegible]

[illegible]

[illegible]

[illegible]

[illegible]

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ATOMIC ENERGY COMMISSION

October 5, 1973

[illegible] Director
Division of Classification

CVR SUBMISSION FOR LASER-FUSION DECLASSIFICATION STAFF PAPER

The Division of Controlled Thermonuclear Research has reviewed the DOD's objections to AEC's proposed declassification of laser initiated fusion information along the lines of CG-LF-2 and does not find their arguments persuasive. The Division fully supports the proposition that maintenance of national security must be the dominant consideration in any decision to declassify information or to relax existing regulations. When it supported the adoption of CG-LF-2, it did not believe, and does not now believe, that the guide compromised that requirement.

DoE b(3) Deleted The AEC's Senior Reviewers, the Division of Military Application and the Division of Classification share this view. Nothing in the letter from the Deputy Secretary of Defense challenges AEC's position in any substantive way.

DOD's rejection is based fundamentally on one and only one point -- the national security would be compromised by the proposed release. They contend that to declassify along guidelines of CG-LF-2 would "open a direct line to the frontier of advanced thinking in the U.S. nuclear weapon program." This issue was addressed and refuted in great detail by all those involved in drawing up CG-LF-2. The arguments are as valid now as they were then. The Deputy Secretary's letter offers very little in the way of explanation as to why they do not accept the results of our extensive review. They do say that the "proposed declassification contains the essence of the calculations on our most advanced devices and the confirmation of those calculations by experiments at the Nevada Test Site," but in the opinion of AEC reviewers this is just not the case (see J. Carson Mark's letter, already referenced, for detailed discussion of this point).

Classified by:

Robert L. Hirsch, Director
Division of Controlled
Thermonuclear Research

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Appendix "A"
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More importantly, however, it is quite reasonable to infer from the Deputy Secretary's letter that the Department of Defense is not as firmly attached to their position as they would have AEC believe. According to their letter, they would be willing to risk declassification, presumably along lines of CG-LF-2 or even more liberal lines, if the laser-fusion concept is shown to be feasible as a method of electric power production. If the national security is truly endangered by the proposed declassification, the Division of Controlled Thermonuclear Research cannot see how it would be less endangered, or even why the government should risk letting it be endangered, simply because electric power production is possible, unless the risk to national security is not as great as is being suggested.

With regard to Roger Batzel's letter of July 18, 1973, the Division would restate that the issue does not concern what utilization has been made of the existing guide. Rather, the issue is whether or not the common defense and national security are endangered. Declassification procedures ought to be initiated for any concept whose exposure does not jeopardize the national security, irrespective of how many uncleared authors publish scientific papers on the subject.

DOE b(3)

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On the basis of the above, the Division of Controlled Thermonuclear Research maintains that the subject declassification is long overdue and recommends that AEC pursue a variation of alternative number 1, which would involve giving DOD ample opportunity to further document their position before final action by AEC is taken to adopt CG-LF-2.

Robert L. Hirsch, Director
Division of Controlled
Thermonuclear Research

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