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UNITED STATES
ATOMIC ENERGY COMMISSION
WASHINGTON

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22 Mar 1948

Lt. General L. H. Brereton
Chairman, Military Liaison Committee
P. O. Box 1814
Washington, D. C.

Dear General Brereton:

There is attached for the information of the Military Liaison Committee a copy of AEC 28, "Application of Radioactive Materials for Military Use." This paper was submitted for comment to the General Advisory Committee and to the Advisory Committee for Biology and Medicine.

Under date of February 11, 1948, Dr. Oppenheimer reported the views of the General Advisory Committee as follows:

"We have examined a staff study (AEC 28) discussing proposed programs for the Atomic Energy Commission in the application of radioactive materials to military use.

"It is the impression of the Committee that the proposals presented to the General Advisory Committee imply an emphasis on problems less important than those of preparation, of dispersal, of weapons, and of military use of such materials. Further, the Committee believes that from a defensive, as well as offensive, point of view these questions are most important in determining countermeasures.

"The Committee recommends, therefore, that the Commission create an ad hoc Panel for the purpose of examining the present status of possibilities of employing radioactive materials in warfare and of suggesting useful field tests of proposals and weapons relating to the problem of dispersal. It would suggest for this Panel: Dr. W. A. Hoyes, Jr., Dr. G. B. Kistiakowsky, Dr. E. O. Lawrence or Dr. Luis Alvarez, Dr. Louis Ridenour, and one or two high-ranking officers who have had appropriate combat experience. It would appear advantageous if Brigadier General James McCormack, Jr., could act as Secretary of the Panel. This recommendation reflects our conviction that unorthodox approaches to this problem need to be encouraged and explored.

"In our opinion the work of the Panel should precede the determination of the AEC's program in radiological warfare."

Under date of February 18, 1948, Dr. Shields Warren reported the views of the Advisory Committee for Biology and Medicine as follows:

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Lt. General L. H. Brereton

"At its meeting February 14, 1948, the Advisory Committee for Biology and Medicine discussed the medical and biologic aspects of RW and considered the recommendation of the General Advisory Committee with regard to establishment of a panel to study this field. The Committee noted that the General Advisory Committee had not included in this suggested panel persons cognizant of the effects of such weapons, and felt that a study neglecting effects would be incomplete. The Advisory Committee for Biology and Medicine, therefore recommends that the Panel on RW suggested by the General Advisory Committee be enlarged to include persons cognizant of radiation effects. The panel, perhaps, would be divided into two subcommittees, one considering problems of production, packaging, delivery, etc., and a second subcommittee to consider medical and biologic effects. The importance of integration of such a study with a complete study of biologic warfare was also stressed, including particularly the use of radiation to induce mutations, biologic agents which might greatly enhance their virulence."

In the light of the comments quoted above, the Commission would like to return to the proposal forwarded to you on October 14, 1947, for the appointment of a Panel in this field. We would now revise our concept of the purpose of such a Panel along the lines recommended by the General Advisory Committee and the Advisory Committee for Biology and Medicine.

We believe that the proposed Panel could be appointed jointly and that it could report jointly to the Commission and to the Military Establishment, if that be the desire of the Armed Forces.

We would assign to the Panel the initial task outlined in the recommendation of the General Advisory Committee and the Advisory Committee for Biology and Medicine, with the added task of recommending the scope and membership of a more permanent Advisory Board along the lines recommended by Dr. McLean in AEC 28.

The Commission requests your renewed attention to this problem and your comments on the proposal which we have outlined above.

Sincerely yours,

UNITED STATES ATOMIC ENERGY COMMISSION

/s/ David E. Lilienthal

David E. Lilienthal
Chairman

Encl: Copy 22, AEC 28

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