

14 JUL 1967

MEMORANDUM FOR THE SECRETARY OF DEFENSE

SUBJECT: DoD Position on Standards for Radiation Exposure of Uranium

The Federal Radiation Council will meet again on Thursday, July 20 to consider a recommendation to the President on the above subject. The background on this is in my memoranda to you of May 11 and June 21 (Tabs A and B). The issue is whether the 0.3 WL level in Secretary Wirtz' order (with the 1 WL level conditionally allowed for the next 18 months), or a flat 1 WL level will be endorsed.

Technically, there has been a thorough re-evaluation by the Public Health Service of the data on which Wirtz based his order. It has been determined that the data could support a threshold for radiation induced cancer at about the 1 WL level, but not at the 0.3 WL level. Of course, a safety factor of three is entirely attractive, except that it appears to work a substantial hardship on the mine owners trying to comply. Consequently, AEC is strongly for the 1 WL level. Secretary Gardner's chief advisors (the Surgeon General and Assistant Secretary Lee) are recommending the 1 WL level to him, but his decision is not yet known to me. Gardner has a date to testify before the Joint Committee on Atomic Energy early in August and he will certainly be acutely aware of the need to justify his decision to them.

On the other hand, Secretary Wirtz' advisors doubt that he will now further ease his order. They cite a variety of reasons he could give, but it seems to me that the main point is that it would represent a retreat for him from a very hard stand.

While DoD has no vested interest in the question, we are in the ambivalent position of my having originally supported the flat 1 WL level,

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7-17-67

but Secretary Wirtz having announced your support of his position before the Joint Committee on Atomic Energy. There would be no difficulty, however, in our now presenting a position of DoD support for Secretary Wirtz, if you so desire.

My recommendation, though, is that DoD support the technically more defensible position of 1 WL, if your commitment to Secretary Wirtz allows this.

Carl Walske
Assistant to the Secretary
of Defense (Atomic Energy)

Secretary's Decision:

Support Secretary Wirtz and 0.3 WL _____

Support 1 WL _____

(Copied)

7/18

I know so little about
the matter that I do not feel
qualified, without further study,
to choose between 1 & .3.

(S) RSM:av