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**ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON HUMAN RADIATION EXPERIMENTS**

1726 M Street, N.W., Suite 600  
Washington, D.C. 20036  
202-254-9795 (Phone)  
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ACH1.950128.001

**FAX TRANSMITTAL**

NUMBER OF PAGES (including cover): 12

TO: Col. Bailey  
FROM: Don Gutman  
DATE: 4/30  
RE: \_\_\_\_\_

*If there are any problems with the transmission of this fax, please call 202-254-9795.*

MESSAGE:  
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ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON HUMAN RADIATION EXPERIMENTS  
1726 M STREET, N.W., SUITE 600  
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20036

**TO:** Col. Bailey  
Col. Brown

**FROM:** Dan Guttman *D*

**DATE:** January 28, 1995

**RE:** Document Request on USAF Flashblindness Experiments

**ACHRE REQUEST 012895-A**

Attached please find a document request to DOD and to the Air Force concerning data on Air Force flashblindness experiments. Staff asks that you provide a response by February 10, 1995.

The ACHRE staff has implemented a database to be used in tracking the status of agency requests. Each request is assigned a unique number so that the request may be tracked, monitored and managed. We would be appreciative if you refer to the ACHRE document request number in any response you make to this request, including all correspondence and documents that you provide to the Committee. This number for this request is provided above in boldface and on the attached document request.

If you have any questions or concerns please contact me at (202) 254-9795. Thank you for your attention to this matter.



## **ACHRE Request 012895-A, Data on Air Force Flashblindness Experiments**

You have provided us a good deal of information on these experiments which, with expert medical assistance, we are now reviewing.

On our initial review, we have the following questions:

1. As recorded in the official reports, at least some retinal injury appears to have occurred in the experimentation. Were (a) any immediately injured individuals, or (b) all other subjects, made the subject of medical follow-up by the Air Force? If so, we would appreciate any documentation or other information on the followup procedures, and the results of followup.

2. As attached, a document provided by DNA indicates recognition that the flashblindness experiments at the bomb tests were subject to the 1953 Secretary of Defense code on experimentation. Is there documentation, or other information, showing that experiments performed following the February, 1953 directive followed the directive? To the extent that the 1953 directive itself was not followed, is there documentation or other information of specific disclosure and consent practices?

3. A 1954 memo located by ACHRE staff, also attached, indicates Air Force recognition that eye injury was occurring to "non-experimental" bomb test observers and/or participants. We attach a copy of this memo. The memo recommends further study and action. Is there any record or other information on studies or actions undertaken as a result of the memorandum?

As always, please let us know if the request needs amplification or clarification.

**Deadline: 02/10/95**

ISS ALL REPLIES  
TO COMMANDANT

B + M - 1019

HEADQUARTERS  
USAF SCHOOL OF AVIATION MEDICINE  
Randolph Air Force Base  
Randolph Field, Texas

SAMDEFY

20 March 1954

SUBJECT: Examination of the Retina of Individuals Exposed to Recent  
Atomic Detonation

TO: Director  
Atomic Energy Commission  
Washington, D. C.

US DCE ARCHIVES	
326 U.S. ATOMIC ENERGY COMMISSION	
RG _____	
Collection	<i>ABM</i>
Box	<i>3365</i>
Folder	<i>7</i>

1. The results from recent animal studies performed by the Eye Department of the USAF School of Aviation Medicine, Randolph Air Force Base, Texas, have demonstrated that irreparable damage to the human retina and choroid can be expected from exposure to the thermal radiation from the fireball of a nominal atomic bomb. This damage can be expected out to a distance of 40 miles.

2. From the above facts we can assume that the enormously larger and longer lasting fireball of a hydrogen device would cause retinal damage at much greater distances. Five human cases of accidental retinal burns caused by such exposure have been observed during tests at the Nevada Proving Grounds in the past two years. These cases, however, were not reported or studied prior to one month after exposure.

3. The Eye Department of this school believes that some individuals in the area of the recent thermo-nuclear detonation must have received atomic chorio-retinal burns. It can be assumed that all persons who viewed the actual fireball without eye protection have received permanent chorio-retinal damage. The curvature of the earth would be a limiting factor in low altitude detonations. In high altitude bursts, however, personnel in aircraft, also at high altitude, could conceivably receive retinal burns out to approximately 1000 miles.

4. It is urged that a thorough search for such lesions be made at once by competent eye physicians. Populations and observers within an approximate radius of 100 miles from ground zero should be surveyed. The exact area for survey would depend on the height of the burst. It is understood that both the Atomic Casualty Commission and the US Air Force have eye doctors in the Far East who could perform such a survey. Colonel Jack Bristow, now in FEAF, has assisted in the eye studies performed at the Nevada Proving Ground.

ALL INFORMATION CONTAINED HEREIN IS UNCLASSIFIED EXCEPT WHERE SHOWN OTHERWISE	
CLASSIFIED BY: _____	
DATE: _____	
REVIEWED BY: _____	
DATE: _____	
NAME: _____	
DATE: _____	

RESTRICTED DATA

[Redacted]

[Redacted]

[Redacted]

[REDACTED]

Hq, USAFSAM Subject: Examination of the Retina of Individuals Exposed to Recent Atomic Detonation

5. It is requested that all available data from these examinations be transmitted to the USAF School of Aviation Medicine. These data should be recorded at the earliest possible time. They should include the distance of the exposed individuals from ground zero, the direction of gaze at time zero, and the estimated time after zero at which the fireball was viewed. The lesions in the eyes should be recorded immediately with accurate descriptions and drawings. Retinal photography is considered an essential part of the case descriptions. If fundus cameras and individuals with special training in their use are not available in the area at this time, a camera and trained personnel who have seen and photographed such injuries, can be furnished by the USAF School of Aviation Medicine.

6. It must be emphasized that an immediate examination is of utmost importance. Such early data would greatly add to our present knowledge of this economically important eye injury in the human.

*John R. McGraw*  
JOHN R. MCGRAW  
Colonel, USAF(MC)  
Deputy Commandant

RESTRICTED DATA

[REDACTED]  
RESTRICTED DATA  
[REDACTED]

*copy destroyed 4/2/54 JH*

[REDACTED]

3/5/54

SWP3G/713

SUBJECT: Status of Human Volunteers in Bio-medical Experimentation

TO: Assistant Secretary of Defense (Health & Medicine)  
Office, Secretary of Defense  
Washington 25, D. C.  
ATTN: Colonel Sheldon S. Brownson

1. In carrying out its responsibilities with regard to the public release of atomic energy information under the provisions of Department of Defense Directives Nos. 3-5400.2, dated 22 September 1952, and 5230.4, dated 26 November 1952, the Office of Public Information requires Headquarters, Armed Forces Special Weapons Project to review and comment on releases involving the military application of atomic energy. The scope of review of documents taken by this headquarters is limited to the following:

- a. Comment is made from the security classification standpoint of the military application of atomic energy.
- b. Comment is made on technical inaccuracies from the standpoint of the military application of atomic energy.

2. In implementing this policy, the Surgeon, Headquarters, AFSWP, is frequently required to review documents containing bio-medical experimental data obtained either by laboratory studies or from atomic weapons tests. Some of these documents contain data obtained by, and make reference to, the use of human volunteers as test subjects.

3. The Surgeon also reviews all proposals for bio-medical research projects programmed at atomic weapons tests by other agencies as well as initiating and sponsoring such proposals. Some of these projects include the use of human volunteers.

Declassified by DHA, Chief, ISTS

*[Handwritten signature]*  
DATE: 8-23-84

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OFFICE SYMBOL	1.	2.	3.	4.	5.
GRADE AND SURNAME OF COORDINATING OFFICERS					

SWPSG/700

Subject: Status of Human Volunteers in Bio-medical Experimentation

4. At the present time, this headquarters is reviewing a technical report entitled "Flash Blindness" which mentions the fact that human volunteers were employed during atomic weapons tests conducted in 1951. Subsequent reports from later tests on the same subject contain comparable references as well as referring to at least two instances in which volunteers were injured as a consequence of taking part in field experiments. Because of the implications involved due to these injuries, it is felt that a definite need exists for guidance in the use of human volunteers as experimental subjects.

5. It is therefore requested that this headquarters be advised if such guidance is available and, if so, that a copy of the policy directive be made available for reference. If such policy guidance has not been formulated, it is recommended that such be done and given the widest possible dissemination to preclude the occurrence of unintentional violations or incidents by research investigators.

DISTR: FOR THE CHIEF, AFSVP:

- Cys 1 & 2 (letterhead) to addressee
- Cy 3 (green) to AG
- Cy 4 (yellow) to AG
- Cy 5 (pink) to AG
- Cy 6 (white) Medical Branch reading file
- Cy 7 (white) Medical Branch comeback file copy

IRVING L. BRANCH  
Colonel, USAF  
Actg. Chief of Staff

(SEE NEXT PAGE FOR M/R) - *secret*

Lt. Col. Browning/mef/18699A/52793

SECOND PAGE REWRITTEN Major Miller/ned/18699A/52793 3-5-54

~~SECRET~~

OFFICE SYMBOL	1. SWPEF	2. SWPSV	3. SWPSC	4. SWPCS	5. SWPAG
GRADE AND SURNAME OF COORDINATING OFFICERS					

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M/R: In Nov 53 it was learned that there existed a T/S document signed by the Secretary of Defense which listed various requirements and criteria which had to be met by individuals contemplating the use of human volunteers in Bio-medical or other types of experimentation. Since this information was of particular importance to this office in classifying and/or releasing information on the Flash Blindness programs at weapons tests, attempts were made to learn of the nature of these requirements. On 14 January 1954, Lt. Colonel Browning and Major Miller had a conference with the Executive Assistant to the Assistant Secretary of Defense (Health and Medical) at which time it was learned that although this document details very definite and specific steps which must be taken before volunteers may be used in experimentation, no serious attempt has been made to disseminate the information to those experimenters who had a definite need-to-know. The lowest level at which it had been circulated was that of the three Secretaries of the Services. The Assistant Secretary and his Executive agree that the document should be downgraded but have not been able to obtain concurrence from Dr. Hannah nor from the Judge Advocate. It was suggested that this office prepare a letter for the Assistant Secretary in which was detailed our need for this information and the manner in which we were handicapped through ignorance of the provisions of this document. It is intended that this letter shall point up the need for some relaxation of the grip in which this document is now held, at least on a definite need-to-know basis.

700

Lt. Colonel Browning/mef/LB699A/52793  
 SECOND PAGE REWRITTEN Major Miller/med/LB699A/52793 3-5-54

OFFICE SYMBOL	1. SWPSC	2. SWPEF	3. SWPSV	4. SWPCS	5. SWPAG
GRADE AND SURNAME OF COORDINATING OFFICERS	L. Garrison	Major Miller	Major Smith		Hannah
	W. Phillips	(D. H. ...)			
					Browning
					Miller

AFSWP ROUTING AND CONTROL SHEET

DLU

NOTE: This Routing and Control Sheet will remain attached to this communication until all action required is completed. After action has been completed it will be filed in the Adjutant General's Office.

TO:	INITIALS	DATE	FOR	DATE RECEIVED	CONTROL NUMBER
CHIEF, AFSWP			APPROVAL		
DEPUTY CHIEF, USA			COMMENT		5F-126
DEPUTY CHIEF, USN			CONCURRENCE	FILE NUMBER	SUSPENSE DATE
CHIEF STAFF		2/25	INFORMATION	SWPSE/700	
DCS/OPERATIONS			NECESSARY ACTION		
CHIEF, PLANS AND ROUTES			NOTE AND FORWARD	TYPE OF COMMUNICATION; NUMBER OF COPIES, IMPROVEMENTS AND INCLOSURES	
CHIEF, OPNS AND TNG			NOTE AND RETURN		
DCS/ADMINISTRATION		2/25	COORDINATION	Letter to Assistant Secretary of Defense	
CHIEF, SECURITY SC-3		2/25	FILE IN AGO		
CHIEF, PERSONNEL			SIGNATURE		
CHIEF, LOGISTICS					
DCS/TECHNICAL SERVICES			FROM:	DATE	
CHIEF, WPMS DEV			Surgeon's Office	10 Feb 1954	
CHIEF, WPMS EFFECT					
CHIEF, WPMS DEFENSE					
CHIEF, WPMS TEST			SUBJECT OR SUMMARY OF THE COMMUNICATION		
ADJUTANT GENERAL		7/27	Status of Human Volunteers in Bio-Medical Experimentation		
INSPECTOR GENERAL					
SPECIAL ASST TO CHIEF, AFSWP					
HISTORIAN					
SURGEON					

REMARKS

Cys 1 & 2 (white letterhead) to addressee  
 Cy 3 (green) to AG  
 Cy 4 (yellow) to AG  
 Cy 5 (pink) to AG  
 Cy 6 (white) Surgeon's Reading File  
 Cy 7 (white) Surgeon's comeback copy for file

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 (File no.)

Declassified by DNA, Chief, ISTS  
 [Signature]  
 DATE: 1/29/94

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TO:	INITIALS	DATE	FOR	DATE RECEIVED	CONTROL NUMBER
CHIEF, AFSWP			APPROVAL		EF-1264
DEPUTY CHIEF, USAF			COMMENT		
DEPUTY CHIEF, USN			CONCURRENCE	FILE NUMBER	SUSPENSE DATE
6 CHIEF STAFF	WJ	3/12	INFORMATION	SWPSG/700	
OCS/OPERATIONS			NECESSARY ACTION		
CHIEF, PLANS AND ROUTS			NOTE AND FORWARD	TYPE OF COMMUNICATION: NUMBER OF COPIES, INCORSEMENTS AND INCLOSURES Letter to Assistant Secretary of Defense	
CHIEF, OPNS AND ENG			NOTE AND RETURN		
OCS/ADMINISTRATION			COORDINATION		
1 CHIEF, SECURITY	P	10 Mar	FILE IN AGO		
CHIEF, PERSONNEL			SIGNATURE		
CHIEF, LOGISTICS					
3 OCS/TECHNICAL SERVICES		3-11		FROM:	DATE
CHIEF, WPNS DEV				Surgeon's Office	10 Mar 1954
2 CHIEF, WPNS EFFECTS	MS	10 Mar			
CHIEF, WPNS DEFENSE				SUBJECT OR SUMMARY OF THE COMMUNICATION  Status of Human Volunteers in Bio-Medical Experimentation	
CHIEF, WPNS TEST					
5 ADJUTANT GENERAL					
INSPECTOR GENERAL					
SPECIAL ASST TO CHIEF, AFSWP					
HISTORIAN					
SURGEON	W.	3-18-54			

REMARKS

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- Cy 6 (white) Surgeon's Reading File
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