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Department of Energy
Washington, D.C. 20545

Honorable Joseph A. Califano, Jr.
Secretary of Health, Education,
and Welfare
Washington, DC 20201

REPOSITORY DOE-FORRESTAL
COLLECTION MARKEY FILES
BOX No. 5076
2.42 BERYLLIUM FILE
FOLDER #1 YEAR 1978

Dear Mr. Califano:

The purpose of this letter is to advise you of the probable impact of the proposed beryllium standard (29 CFR Part 1910) on the national security. Our position and recommendations are based on the results of a recently completed DOE report which is enclosed for your information. Volume I contains all of the information except a small classified Volume II which is limited to weapon design.

The DOE study concluded that it is improbable that industry will invest millions of dollars in an attempt to reduce the beryllium exposure with no assurance that their facilities can be brought into compliance with the proposed standard. In addition, the proposed beryllium standard places an extreme burden upon the free world's two primary beryllium producers, who may cease production of high-purity beryllium metal and beryllium oxide if the proposed OSHA standard is promulgated.

The loss of beryllium production capability would seriously impact our ability to develop and produce weapons for the nuclear stockpile and, consequently, adversely affect our national security. Furthermore, our existing stockpile weapons could not be remanufactured with substitute materials without nuclear testing to verify performance; in some cases, full-yield testing would be necessary. Beryllium is also contained in weapons currently under development and approved by the President for entry into the stockpile; these weapons would have to be redesigned to exclude beryllium components. The redesign of weapons in stockpile or those in development would require a long-term major investment and would incur significant penalties in performance, safety, and cost. A long-term development program would also be required to establish substitute materials for DOD applications. Clearly, cessation of beryllium metal and/or beryllium oxide production is unacceptable and would significantly and adversely affect our national defense.

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We certainly agree that the worker's health is of paramount importance. However, significant questions have been raised within the scientific community concerning the quality and adequacy of the data on which change of the present standard is based by the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH). Therefore, we believe it is in the national interest for the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare (DHEW) to undertake an independent peer review of all available data on the effects of beryllium to address the adequacy of the present standard before issuing the proposed new standard.

An identical letter has been sent to the Honorable F. Ray Marshall, Secretary of Labor.

Sincerely,

James R. Schlesinger
Secretary of Energy

Enclosure:
Special Task Group Report -
Beryllium, Volume I

cc: Dr. Zbigniew Brzezinski
Asst. to the President for
National Security, w/encl.

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Beryllium file

For your information - a copy of Mr. Califano's letter to DOL Secretary Marshall re the results of their review of the data which indicate the carcinogenicity of beryllium. This review was requested by Dr. Schlesinger in his August 30, 1978, letter to Mr. Califano.

DMR

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