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NOTE TO GENERAL STARBIRD
THRU Colonel Hood and Captain Houston
FROM Cdr P. F. Bankhardt, USN
Test Branch

January 8, 1960

SAB2000644A001

SUBJECT: SAC PLANS TO USE ENIWETOK FOR ATLAS SHOTS GROUND ZERO

Jim Reeves' attached memorandum of December 29, 1959 discusses Air Force plans to impact ICBM's fired from Vandenberg AFB, Calif. in the Eniwetok area and even in the lagoon as early as January 12, 1960. Needless to say, ALO is somewhat concerned about safety of our personnel.

A check with AFOAT indicates that the first firing has been delayed some 45 days. On January 6th I talked to Admiral Connolly, Assistant Ch. of Navy's Bureau of Weapons for PMR. He had Cdr. Aller of his staff call me and assure that shots to impact in the lagoon will not be approved. He stated that the Air Force has not been permitted to include funds for impact photography and has assured the Navy that it is not desired.

Present firing controls provide for destroying any missile whose trajectory is indicated to be erratic. While a good flight can be expected to be surprisingly accurate, it is not possible in flight to detect inaccuracies of less than 20 miles. Therefore, errors of this order might occur. Probabilities of injuring anyone are so small that ships and aircraft are placed within this distance to observe impacts but our people would not be subjected to this risk.

Due to the contradiction in spotting requirements, Navy's PMR office would like to see or get some details from these memos from Reeves. advised them that these were internal memos indicating what our people understood and not suitable to show what the Air Force is planning to do.

But for our own protection we would be glad to discuss the contents with the local PMR staff.

On Jan. 7th JTF-7 called on the same subject. They have received an informal memo from the 4950th in Albuquerque about the same meeting with SAC. That memo cites a message from Air Force Headquarters (AFOOP 95623) telling them to go ahead with the shots using Mack Tower as ground zero.

Later on Jan. 7th Cdr Aller called again. He wished to correct a "misimpression" he may have left the day before. The Navy would not forbid a firing but instead furnishes to the Air Force safety criteria. So long as the Air Force can stay within these criteria, they may go ahead.

I advised him that the AEC had agreed to PMR use of Eniwetok only for communications and for monitoring impacts at outside targets by a hydro-

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phone system. Use of this atoll as a target would require our approval. Such approval is improbable for any time that our people are occupying the atoll.

Cdr Aller was going to determine the status of these Air Force plans through Pt. Mugu and others and call back later.

As of Friday afternoon, January 8th, Mr. Marty Bloom of Cdr Aller's office reported that a dispatch had been sent to PMR, Pt. Mugu and a reply received stating that full information would be furnished the first of next week. They will call us upon receipt.

Attachment:

DMA #9-12754 (ALO)

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CC: Test rdr

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