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Advisory Committee on Human Radiation Experiments

CONTACT TRACKING FORM

Composed by: Mark Goodman/ACHRE

Date Composed: 04/10/95

CONTACT

Name: Lt. Col. W. E. Harlan
Date of Initial Contact: 04/10/95
Contact Initiated by: ACHRE
Referral (if any): Col. Dan Brown, USAF
Initial Approach: Telephone
Initial Contact with: Mark Goodman
Contact Category: Research
Purpose for initial contact: To discuss the Green Run

ADDRESS

Preferred Address: Residence

Business AddressHome Address

465 South 162nd Street
Seattle, Washington 98148
206-243-4573 (Phone)

INTERVIEWS & TESTIMONY

Type: Interview

Documentation:

If this is an interview,

- a. Significant title or responsibility of individual: Coauthor of Green Run Report, "Dissolving of Twenty Day Metal at Hanford," commander of aerial survey aircraft
- b. Reason for interview, if different from above:
- c. When interview was conducted: 4/10/95
- d. Where interview was conducted: telephone
- e. Who conducted interview (names): Mark Goodman

If this is testimony,

- a. Date of ACHRE meeting:
- b. Organization represented, if different from above:
- c. Title of individual in that organization:

Summary of interview or testimony:

FOLLOW-UP PROPOSED

Follow-up assigned to: Mark Goodman

Follow-up format: Letter

Follow-up proposed: *Mail these notes for review and correction, send along additional documents.*

Follow-up date proposed: 04/11/95

COMMENT

William Eugene "Gene" Harlan worked with Jack Healy on the operational planning of the Green Run. He was not involved in the overall planning for the size of the release, but worked on logistics for the aerial sampling flight.

Harlan was the commander of the C-47 that flew at Oak Ridge and Hanford in the winter and spring of 1948-1949, measuring radioactivity in the air with a variety of instruments. This was the same aircraft and the same instruments that flew later at the Green Run. The Green Run was therefore the direct follow-on to these earlier flights.

Harlan's role as co-author of the Green Run report was to supply the aerial survey data. His overall role was that of collecting data.

Harlan is listed as a coauthor on reports of the Oak Ridge and Hanford survey missions and on the Green Run report: Dissolving of Twenty Day Metal at Hanford. He does not have copies of the Oak Ridge report or other documents that have since been declassified. I will sent him copies of these documents:

- the Oak Ridge report on the Oak Ridge and Hanford aerial surveys
- the two planning memos on the Green Run
- The Air Force progress reports on the Oak Ridge and Hanford aerial surveys.

Harlan lived for a year at Oak Ridge and for a year at Hanford (until January 1950). He was active in aerial survey missions until 1957, when he worked with the U.S. Geological Survey on radiological surveys of possible uranium ore deposits. This work continued his collaboration with people from Oak Ridge: Francis Davis, Paul Reinhardt, et al.

I asked if he was aware of any concerns or expressed any concerns over the magnitude of the Green Run release. He said his only concern was to see that his crew had dosimetry badges and that those badges were processed.

I asked about the weather. He said he was not involved in setting the meteorological requirements and was not aware of any prior discussion of actual meteorological conditions. He also did not recall that the weather went particularly badly.

I cited the conclusion in the Green Run report that under the worst possible weather conditions the plume had been seen at a distance of over a hundred miles. Under favorable conditions, it could have been

detected an order of magnitude farther away. I asked if there had been plans to fly to greater distances, but he did not know of any.

I asked him about the utility of the Green Run. Did it turn out to be useful? He argued that the military goals were satisfied. The Green Run provided another data point. I asked whether this data could have been obtained any other way. He thought not. He didn't think it terribly different from the cloud sampling missions at atmospheric nuclear tests in Nevada, but those didn't come until later. He wasn't at operation Sandstone in the Pacific in 1948, which apparently did have some sampling activities [this is a reference to Operation Fitzwilliam, the intelligence component of Sandstone]. I mentioned that the altitude of the plume from the Green Run would have been lower, but he said that cloud tracking was not done at particularly high altitudes.

I pressed him on this. I was confused about the utility of aerial surveys for detecting Soviet production facilities (the acknowledged purpose of the Green Run). Would the CIA be sending planes into Soviet airspace for that purpose? Could the plume be detected outside Soviet airspace? Harlan said that he didn't know what happened to the data after they were turned in, so he couldn't comment on this.

I asked him what he thought, retrospectively, about the publicity the Green Run had received. He responded "I think it's a lot of nothing" as far as the hazards went (from my standpoint). After all, he is still alive and his children are normal. I gave my description of the hazards of low-level radiation exposure -- that there was still some risk of cancer but that this was difficult to detect against the natural background rate of cancer. He said that was how he had always thought about it.

Harlan also flew in sampling missions in Nevada, flying out of Indian Springs AFB. He was involved in the main cloud sampling missions, and knew the name Paul Guthals, although he said he was not associated with him. The Green Run came before the sampling missions at Nevada.

I asked him if there was anything else I should know, for example, about the spirit of the times. "The spirit of the times was secrecy, primarily," he replied, adding that the defense purpose and the political situation (Russia getting the bomb) added to the sense of urgency.

Finally, I asked him if he was aware of any sense of impatience to get the Green Run over with. Was it done hastily, under less than optimal conditions? He said he felt no such impatience. I asked specifically about Carl Gamertsfelder's recollection that the Green Run went ahead because of Air Force pressure in spite of less than ideal weather, and he knew nothing about any such pressure.