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GENERAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE  
to the  
U. S. ATOMIC ENERGY COMMISSION  
Washington 25, D. C.

April 9, 1954

Mr. Lewis L. Strauss, Chairman  
U. S. Atomic Energy Commission  
Washington 25, D. C.

Dear Mr. Strauss:

This letter is the first section of the usual report of the Chairman of the General Advisory Committee to the Chairman of the Atomic Energy Commission which follows a meeting of the GAC. This letter covers the discussion of the GAC at its meetings on March 31, April 1 and 2, 1954, of the staff papers and recommendations with respect to the Nevada Proving Grounds (AEC 141/22 and 141/23; Report of the Committee to Study the NPG, dated Feb. 1, 1954; Report of the Advisory Committee for Biology and Medicine).

The General Advisory Committee has already made its views on the subject of weapon testing known to the AEC in the report of the Chairman of the GAC dated February 10, 1953. The relevant paragraph reads as follows:

"The level of effort in test programs has been increased greatly in recent years; this has undoubtedly been a very significant factor in the weapon progress which has been achieved. We feel that the test programs are technically very desirable and are extremely useful in the Commission's program of weapon development. There are indications that, even in its present advanced status, our actual test capability may not be adequate for all of the experiments which it would be valuable to carry out; and, hence, we have considered whether this capability should be increased. Since the results of the test programs are certain to affect the optimum composition of the stockpile with respect to weapon types, and since the information will be most useful before the stockpile increases to the point that weapon refabrication becomes an unmanageable task, we are led to favor an increase in the weapon testing capabilities in the near future."

CLASSIFICATION CANCELLED  
BY AUTHORITY OF DOE/OC

REVIEWED BY Carl Wilson 9/11/84

DATE

H.R. Schmidt 8/12/85

By: W. Trench 3/21/86

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The GAC wishes to reaffirm the views previously expressed with respect to the importance of tests of nuclear weapon design as a necessary means of progress. The GAC further strongly endorses the recommendations in the staff papers with respect to the NPG.

However, the GAC does not believe that the number of tests should be limited to 10 per year as suggested, but that the number should be determined by the needs of the weapon laboratories and the Division of Military Application.

The GAC fully endorses the recommendation that each proposal for a test should be scrutinized with the utmost care as to need, and that no effort should be spared to exercise the greatest precautions to safeguard the surrounding communities and the test personnel with respect to fall-out, blast, and blast damage. With the increased understanding of these proposals, precautionary measures become more effective.

The GAC knows of no substitute for tests on the continental site to maintain our lead in the field of atomic weapons. We have seen no suggestion for another site which has the advantages of the NPG.

The GAC therefore recommends that the use of the NPG be continued, and that no arbitrary limitation should be imposed on the number of tests in any given period. At the same time the GAC recognizes that unless the greatest precautions are taken, a certain element of danger will always attend tests of nuclear weapons.

Sincerely yours,

I. I. Rabi  
Chairman