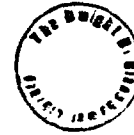


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EXECUTIVE OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT
NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL
WASHINGTON

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December 18, 1950



MEMORANDUM FOR THE PRESIDENT:

As directed in National Security Council memorandum dated November 14, 1950, the Atomic Energy Commission has made a review of possible locations for the required additional atomic weapons test site. The Department of Defense has assisted the Atomic Energy Commission in this review.

At the beginning, it may of course be said that there would be outstanding advantages in having a continental site for all atomic weapons tests, involving a wide range of energy release of from, say, 1000 to 500,000 tons TNT equivalent, or more, and for tests of special nature. However, there are problems of site acquisition and logistics which preclude consideration for early and efficient use of very remote sites, as in Northern Canada or Alaska, and less remote continental sites present questions of radiological safety for tests of very high energy release and other tests which might involve a high order of radiological contamination. These latter questions may be answered satisfactorily as test knowledge increases through experiments, and as the world situation may develop, but they are not satisfactorily answered at present.

The Commission has therefore, after study, limited itself at this stage in its serious examination of possible sites to those which might meet the urgent requirements of the immediate weapons development program. The essential need now is for a site at which a few relatively low order detonations may be done safely and with minimum non-productive cost in time, effort and money at the earliest possible dates, preferably within the next two to three months. The Commission budget now before Congress contains \$1,000,000 for the initiation of development of a continental test site.

The criteria for such a site include primarily: ready accessibility to the Los Alamos Laboratory by land and air, good communications, adequate radiological safety, reasonably regular topography and prospects of economy of preparation and operation. There are two general areas within the continental U. S. where it is believed a considerable portion of the expected AEC testing program could be conducted without undue public radiological hazard. These are the South Central Atlantic Coastal area and the arid Southwest. There are four locations within these two areas where some of the facilities needed for operations are already in existence, so that a site could be developed for atomic tests at reasonable cost. These locations are:

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- a. The Las Vegas, Nevada, Bombing and Gunnery Range.
- b. The Dugway, Utah, Proving Ground.
- c. The White Sands, N. M., Proving Ground (contains the Trinity site used in 1945).
- d. The Camp Lejeune, N. C., area, North Carolina.

The Las Vegas site (see map attached) has been selected as the most desirable. It has the following advantages:

- a. The site is within easy reach of the Los Alamos Scientific Laboratory.
- b. The weather and terrain conditions are such that it will be possible to use the site at any time during the twelve months of the year.
- c. An atomic weapons test site is immediately available within the approximately 5400 square miles of Government-owned land currently in use by the U. S. Air Force. It is possible to establish test points which will not unduly restrict continued practice bombing and gunnery operations except during actual test periods.
- d. Meteorological conditions and population density are such that some of the most urgent atomic weapons tests can certainly be conducted well within acceptable limits of public radiological safety. Each specific test operation would of course be subject to examination and approval by recognized experts.
- e. Many of the buildings, power supply requirements transport and communications lines, etc., required for operations already exist at the Las Vegas range.

In comparison with the Las Vegas site, the Carolina Coast site, in addition to the disadvantage of its relatively great distance from Los Alamos, does not have the necessary Government-controlled land area, while Dugway and White Sands do not provide quite so high a degree of radiological safety.

It should be noted that development of the Las Vegas range as an atomic weapons test site would not eliminate the current requirement for use of Eniwetok, Amchitka or some other similarly very remote site for tests where the radiological hazards involved may be beyond the limits acceptable in the United States. Thus, there remains a requirement of some urgency to find a secure site alternate to Eniwetok and Amchitka for use in an emergency which may deny the use of Eniwetok or Amchitka. This point will continue to receive attention.

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The Special Committee of the National Security Council on Atomic Energy recommends approval by the President of the development of a portion of the Las Vegas Bombing and Gunnery Range as an atomic weapons test site. The publicity attendant on the establishment of this test site will, as in the case of the Amchitzka site, be coordinated by the Special Committee of the National Security Council on Atomic Energy.

James S. Lay, Jr.
JAMES S. LAY, JR.
Executive Secretary



APPROVED:

Harry Truman

HARRY S. TRUMAN

Date: Dec. 18, 1950

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FOLDER #5 ADDITIONAL TEST SITE