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DISPOSITION OF RUNIT ISLAND

We have reviewed the questions posed in the TWX to M. E. Gates, August 3, 1972, concerning plutonium studies at Eniwetok as transmitted by the memorandum of August 3, 1972, entitled "Disposition of Runit Island." Our view is that at this time, we cannot tell whether there is merit to considering conduct of plutonium studies over a period of years on Runit Island as a viable alternative to cleanup and decontamination of this island. We know that the plutonium contamination on Runit presents a very complex picture and that present distributions of plutonium with respect to land area and soil depth result from numerous test sources. There has been much soil movement by earth movers and plowing. Thus, the plutonium contamination of Runit is a unique situation. It is unlikely there would be comparable problems of contamination in the U. S. where knowledge of plutonium in this atoll environment would be applicable. We feel that serious consideration cannot be given to alternatives for treating the cleanup or other disposition of islands at Eniwetok Atoll until adequate radiological information is collected and evaluated.

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