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MARSHALL ISLANDS RESEARCH VESSEL

Pursuant to your request of August 15, 1973, NV has explored the available alternatives for the provision of dedicated inter-atoll transportation and on-site marine support in the Marshall Islands.

At the outset it became clear that the most logical base from which to support such a vessel was the United States Army's Kwajalein Missile Range (KMR). At Kwajalein the Army currently maintains and operates for its own requirements four LCU's as well as a variety of other vessels. In informal conversations with Army and support contractor personnel, it has been determined that the addition of one LCU to this fleet on a cost-reimbursement basis would probably not represent a significant interference with the KMR mission. To be compatible with the existing LCU inventory, the vessel should be a 1466 class hull, which is an Army-peculiar hull type. From the U. S. Army Troop Support Command, it has been determined, again informally, that such vessels, although not in excess, exist in sufficient numbers such that, with appropriate justification, one could probably be made available. From all standpoints it would appear most desirable for the vessel to be assigned by the Army as an increase in KMR's authorization for the express purpose of providing specified support to the Commission.

Such a concept was offered for consideration and comment by the Commander, U. S. Army Safeguard Systems Command (KMR's parent Headquarters) and met with a negative response. In informal staff discussions, however, it became apparent that the Command (1) viewed the NV proposal as a diversion of effort from the KMR mission, (2) felt that it lacked any justification for requesting augmentation of its marine department resources, and (3) was concerned about reimbursement. It is suggested that all of these concerns might be dispelled by having the Department of Defense formally incorporate the required support in the mission of the Safeguard Systems Command and, in turn, of KMR. Such a mission assignment would, of course, include provision for full reimbursement of all appropriate costs by the Commission.

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Only preliminary discussions have been conducted relative to the probable cost of acquisition, maintenance and operation of an LCU under the above-discussed concept. One purpose of the request to the Safeguard Systems Command was to permit such discussions to be opened; however, from the operating experience of KMR, it would appear that maintenance and operation in accord with Dr. Barr's utilization estimates might reasonably be forecast to cost approximately \$150K per year. Acquisition, under the concept set forth above, should not be a reimbursable cost, although some refurbishing, modifying and outfitting costs may be anticipated. Tentatively \$50K seems a reasonable upper limit for these costs. In order to further refine these estimates, detailed discussions with the Army will be required.

To enable NV to continue with the development of the required plan, it is recommended that action be taken to request that the appropriate official of the Department of Defense assign to the Department of the Army the above-described support mission. Pending such assignment, an expedited action to permit authoritative staff discussions to progress would be most helpful. A draft text of the recommended action (letter) is enclosed.

Mahlon E. Gates
Manager

Enclosure:
Draft ltr to Office of the
Secretary of Defense

bcc - W. B. Hills, Director, PASO, w/encl.
Dr. R. A. Conard, BNL, w/o encl.



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