

REVIEW OF FEDERAL STUDIES ON HEALTH EF-  
FECTS OF LOW-LEVEL RADIATION EXPOSURE  
AND IMPLEMENTATION OF PUBLIC LAW 97-72

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HEARING  
BEFORE THE  
SUBCOMMITTEE ON  
OVERSIGHT AND INVESTIGATIONS  
OF THE  
COMMITTEE ON VETERANS' AFFAIRS  
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES  
NINETY-EIGHTH CONGRESS  
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Mr. EDGAR. Let me quote a very curious paragraph from this letter:

We are concerned with the perceptions among both veterans and the public of what would result from the enactment of H.R. 3493, as passed by the Senate, that bill which eventually became law. Section 3 of the Senate-passed bill creates the unmistakable impression that exposure to low-level ionizing radiation is a significant health hazard when available scientific and medical evidence simply does not support that contention. This mistaken impression has the potential to be seriously damaging to every aspect of the Department of Defense's nuclear weapons and nuclear propulsion program. The legislation could adversely affect our relations with our European allies, impact upon the civilian nuclear power industry, and raise questions regarding the use of radioactive substances in medical diagnosis and treatment.

Does the Department of Defense still believe that that is true, an analysis of the legislation which eventually became law?

General GRIFFITH. I believe it's true. I think that the letter said it well. The scientific opinion is that low levels of radiation are low risk. I think that the 5 rem Federal standard has been a good one and I think that if we encourage the notion that exposures to half a rem or a rem is hazardous to the health, that it could reflect seriously in major ways in our civilian economy as well as in our military.

Mr. EDGAR. Except your letter inferred that it will destroy the Western alliance and it will do damage to the future of the nuclear power industry and now that it has become law that we are enabling the VA to have medical analysis of these veterans, has it, in fact, done the devastating damage that is suggested in this letter?

General GRIFFITH. Well, to my knowledge, there has been no devastating damage yet and—

Mr. EDGAR. Thank you. That's, I think, an important point.

General GRIFFITH [continuing]. That I know of.

Mr. BRITTIGAN. If I may, however after that letter was dispatched your chairman inserted some very helpful language in the bill with respect to causation; and in our view, that greatly alleviated the adverse impact of the bill.

Mr. EDGAR. Helpful to whom?

Mr. BRITTIGAN. Language that was helpful to avoid a misperception, the fact that providing treatment necessarily gave rise to any presumption as to causation. I don't recall the precise language, but it was to the effect that treatment was without regard to whether or not the exposure caused the disability.

Mr. EDGAR. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I have two additional questions that I will save for the second round.

Mr. MONTGOMERY. Mr. Daschle.

Mr. DASCHLE. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

General Griffith, have you read the decontamination report that followed Operation Crossroads?

General GRIFFITH. No, I haven't.

Mr. DASCHLE. You haven't read it. Have you read the correspondence that Col. Stafford L. Warren, who was the Chief of the Radiological Safety Section at Operation Crossroads had compiled after the tests?

General GRIFFITH. No, I haven't seen that correspondence.