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INSTALLATIONS AND LOGISTICS

2 DEC 1975

MEMORANDUM FOR Secretary of Defense

SUBJECT: Congressman Moorhead's Suggestion that DoD Accelerate
Development of Solar Cells - ACTION MEMORANDUM

On November 17, 1975, Mr. Moorhead, as Chairman of Conservation,
Energy, and Natural Resources Subcommittee of the Committee on Govern-
ment Operations, wrote you with congratulations and best wishes on your
appointment as Secretary of Defense and solicited your reaction on a
November 11, 1975 editorial in the Washington Post by David Morris on
Solar Cells (Tab A). Mr. Morris' editorial is critical of many as-
pects of the Energy Research and Development Administration's solar
cell development program. However, in the context of Congressman
Moorhead's request, only the section pertaining to Department of Defense
large-scale early procurement of solar cells need be addressed. Mr. Morris
notes that DoD procured transistors when they were very high-cost items
and that these procurements resulted in the adoption by industry of mass
production techniques which in turn reduce the cost of transistors to a
point where they were viable in the civilian sector.

Unlike transistors, solar cells do not afford a unique capability except
in a very limited number of special applications such as satellites. How-
ever, our studies to date indicate that solar cells can be used beneficially
in a substantial number of DoD applications such as battery charging
devices and as prime power sources at remote installations where our
power costs are unusually high. In anticipation that the DoD potential
market for solar cells will come to fruition, ERDA is providing almost
$2 million worth of solar cell power sources to DoD for demonstration in
a number of promising applications.

Recommend you sign the attached letter to Congressman Moorhead indi-
cating that we are already proceeding with a program of the type sug-
gested by Mr. Morris (Tab B).

JOHN J. BENNETT
Acting Assistant Secretary of Defense
(Installations and Logistics)

OK (W)

Attachment