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DEPARTMENT OF STATE

MEMORANDUM OF CONVERSATION

Date: April 16, 1954

Subject: Japanese Fishermen Who Suffered from Radioactive Fall Out

Participants: His Excellency Sadao Iguchi, Ambassador of Japan  
Mr. Robert D. Murphy, Deputy Under Secretary  
Mr. R. J. G. McClurkin, Deputy Director, NA

Copies to: G-cc NA/J-1  
S/AE-cc(2) OLI-2  
U/OC-Mr. Radius(cc) HD-1  
Embassy Tokyo-cc FE/P-1  
FE-cc NA-3

Ambassador Iguchi came in at his request. He said that he had received a telegram from Foreign Minister Okazaki about compensation for the Japanese fishermen who had suffered from radioactive fall out as a result of the Eniwetok tests of the Hydrogen Bomb. In general the Japanese Government hopes that there can be a lump-sum settlement speedily and at a reasonable amount. He emphasized the desirable results which would flow from an early announcement of an intent to conclude such a settlement.

Mr. Murphy said that there has been a certain degree of anxiety here about the way in which some parts of the Japanese Government have handled this whole problem. In particular, we have had real concern about the lack of accessibility to the fishermen or their boat -- a situation which still applies even to new arrivals of boats reported as having radioactive hulls or cargoes. Mr. Murphy said that he wanted to say frankly that this attitude of the Japanese Government which faced the United States with a barrier of inaccessibility raised serious suspicions and doubts.

Ambassador Iguchi said that Ambassador Allison had written to Prime Minister Yoshida directly to somewhat the same effect. He himself had received a letter from Foreign Minister Okazaki-- and he promised to send a copy to the Department -- which commented that the attitude of the American doctors was not quite appropriate from the Japanese point of view. When they first saw the patients there apparently had been no word of consolation.

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After a little further discussion of this point the question of compensation again came up. Mr. Murphy said that it is a somewhat odd situation to get a request for compensation when we are blocked off from the facts which would determine what the compensation should be. Other agencies here in Washington have the impression that Mr. Okazaki is trying to cooperate but that some parts of the Japanese Government and many of the scientists involved are not, and so questions even arise as to why the boat was in the locality.

Ambassador Iguchi said that he recognized the difficulty which rested upon the psychology of the patients concerned, the jealousy and pride of the Japanese scientists, and the political heat which has been created by the whole question.