

Lewis L. Strauss, Chairman
K. D. Nichols, General Manager

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May 27, 1954

" On March 1, the first detonation of test series took place. As AEC Chairman Strauss stated, this detonation was larger than expected. Radioactive debris fell on several inhabited atolls in Marshall Islands. On subsequent shots in test series no significant fall-out on inhabited areas occurred. On March 2, I learned that the inhabited islands of Rongelap, Rongerik and Uterik had received considerable fall-out so that it appeared necessary to evacuate certain U.S. personnel and Marshall Island natives. The evacuation was performed within the next two days by Task Force destroyers and ACFT.

"This evacuation of 52 Rongelap natives, 154 Uterik natives and 28 U. S. personnel from Rongerik to Naval Station at Kwajalein has been mentioned previously in the press. When the natives were advised of situation they participated willingly in evacuation which was accomplished quickly and without incident.

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"At Kwajalein the natives were placed under careful medical surveillance and treatment. It soon became apparent that Uterik natives had not received serious exposures. When it was determined that they would not suffer physically they were moved to another island in the Kwajalein Atoll where they have remained under the care of Commander Naval Station at Kwajalein. The Rongelap natives received greater exposures which caused temporary lowering of blood counts, instances of temporary opilation and skin lesions. There have been no fatalities and none will result from the exposures receive

"A medical unit from Naval Medical Research Institute and other service agencies began operations at Kwajalein on March 8. They made frequent periodic blood counts, urinalyses and other observations. This unit returned to the U. S. from Kwajalein early this month when it became evident that all exposed natives and U. S. personnel would recover without serious consequences. The 28 Americans who were exposed on Rongerik Island were kept under medical observation at Kwajalein by the medical unit. These men were moved to Tripler Army Hospital at Honolulu early this month where they received thorough medical examinations. They have been returned to the U. S. to duty with their parent organizations.

DOE ARCHIVES

"In April a survey party consisting of representatives from JTF Seven, CINCOPACFLT, HICOMTERPACIS, the AEC Engineer Contractors (Holmes & Narvor) and the native registrars of Rongelap and Uterik visited these two Atolls to determine when natives might return and what action must be taken prior to their return.

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As a result of this survey and recommendations of High Commissioner the following actions will be taken:

- A. Within the next ten days 154 natives of Uterik will be returned to their homes and they will be furnished adequate water and food supplies. Since the native homes were not damaged and since the radioactivity levels are extremely low it is possible to reestablish Uterik natives in their homes at this time.
- B. The radioactivity level at Rongelap, while low, will not permit return of natives at this time. This contamination will decay and will be down to acceptable levels by May 1955. In order that the 62 Rongelap natives may be comfortable and properly cared for while they await return to their homes the AEC contractor (Holmes & Narver) are constructing on IJIT Island of Majuro Atoll a new village of wood and aluminum dwellings and other buildings. This construction will be financed by JTF SAFEN. The Rongelap natives will be moved from Kwajalein to their new homes at Majuro when this construction is finished early in June.
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- C. The AEC will continue to monitor the medical conditions of the exposed natives.

In addition the AEC and other agencies will periodically visit the natives and the two home atolls. The Rongelap natives will be returned to their homes as soon as possible and they will be furnished, as in the case of the Uterik natives, water and food supplies.

DOE ARCHIVES

The Department of State has been notified of and has no objection to the visit. We understand State has informed the U. S. delegation at the U.N.

State and Interior believe it would be useful for the U. S. delegation to report to the Trusteeship Council that the Marshallese are being moved. Gerard Smith's office has requested a draft report which is being prepared by the AEC staff and will be submitted for policy judgment before being provided to State.

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DIVISION OF BIOLOGICAL
AND NATURAL RESOURCES