



UNITED STATES
ATOMIC ENERGY COMMISSION
WASHINGTON 25, D.C.

402749

May 27, 1963

528 6/2/63

MEMORANDUM FOR CHAIRMAN SEABORG

Acting
THROUGH GENERAL MANAGER *MSJ*

SUBJECT: MEDICAL STATUS OF MARSHALLESE ISLANDS,
FEBRUARY-MARCH, 1963

It is a pleasure to report that the just-concluded annual medical survey of the Marshallese natives exposed to fallout from the March 1, 1954 shot revealed no problems attributable to their radiation history. The survey team arrived there during a rather severe poliomyelitis epidemic, but were able to complete the work successfully.

The attached preliminary record, prepared by Drs. Conard and Hicking, provides the significant details of the observations. A more complete record of the observations and conclusions will be published by Brookhaven National Laboratory toward the end of the summer.

C. L. Dunham, M.D.
Director
Division of Biology and Medicine

Attachments:

- ltr., Conard to Dunham, 5/17/63
- ltr., Conard to Commander, PMR, 5/15/63
- ltr., Goding to Conard, 5/9/63
- Preliminary Statement of Conard and Hicking dated 4/23/63

- cc: Commissioner Haworth
- Commissioner Palfrey
- Commissioner Ramey
- Commissioner Wilson

STATUS VERIFIED *U*

BY *[Signature]*

DATE 5-7-81

NON-CCRP

| |
|--|
| US DOE ARCHIVES |
| 326 US ATOMIC ENERGY |
| COMMISSION |
| RG _____ |
| Collection <i>Former Comm. Seaborg Files</i> |
| Box <i>69</i> |
| Folder <i>OTM 2 DIVISION OF BIOLOGY AND</i> |

DOE ARCHIVES

May 17, 1963

Dr. C. L. Dunham
Director
Division of Biology and Medicine
U. S. Atomic Energy Commission
Washington 25, D.C.

Dear Chuck:

I have just gotten back the signed statement on the preliminary results of the recent survey, which I am enclosing along with an extra copy, (unsigned). Mr. Goding has been sent a signed copy of this statement and today I am mailing one also to Ambassador Sidney Yates, who is the chief U. S. representative at the Trusteeship Council Meeting of the UN, which is to take place the first week in June. I have offered my services at the time of this meeting.

I am also enclosing a copy of a letter from Mr. Goding which I just received. It was quite a shock to learn of Dr. Macdonald's sudden death. For some time he had not been a well man. I am wondering who they will get to replace him.

Vic and I, along with Jim Robertson and Stan Cohn, have been discussing the need for a whole body counting facility at Rongelap and the permanent building there. Vic will no doubt be in touch with you at an early date for further discussion of this matter.

With best regards,

Sincerely yours,

R. A. Conrad, M.D.

:gmd
Encs.
CC Dr. Bruner ✓

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Done,
The Eight year report will be out soon and I will send you copies -

Pat

May 15, 1963

Commander
Pacific Missile Range
Headquarters
Pacific Missile Range
Point Mugu, California

Dear Sir:

I would like to take this opportunity to express my sincere appreciation for the fine cooperation and assistance rendered by you and your group at Kwajalein in carrying out the annual medical survey last March on the Marshallese people who had been exposed to fallout radiation in 1954. The assistance rendered by Captain Paul Holmberg USN and his staff of the Pacific Missile Range Facility and the Transport Company of Texas at Kwajalein was invaluable and was largely responsible for the success of the survey. We obtained much valuable information from the survey in addition to giving medical care to the exposed people.

We are deeply grateful to the Navy and particularly to the Pacific Missile Range for the continued wholehearted support of these surveys.

We plan on carrying out the tenth annual medical survey around February/March 1964 and hope that we can call again on you for assistance.

Sincerely yours,

Robert A. Conard, M.D.
Head, AEC Marshall Islands
Medical Survey Team

sgd
CC Captain Holmberg
Dr. Dunham
Dr. Bruner ✓
Mr. Brummett



TRUST TERRITORY OF THE PACIFIC ISLANDS
OFFICE OF THE HIGH COMMISSIONER
SAIPAN, MARIANA ISLANDS

COMMERCIAL
CABLE ADDRESS
HICOTT SAIPAN

May 9, 1963

Robert A. Conard, M.D.
Brookhaven National Laboratory
Associated Universities, Inc.
Medical Department
Upton, L.I., N. Y.

Dear Dr. Conard:

Thank you for your letter of April 26, 1963 on the proposed permanent structure on Rongelap. I have sent a copy of your letter to the District Administrator in the Marshalls for his information also.

I regret to inform you that Dr. Macdonald died suddenly of a heart attack at Truk on May 1, 1963. I know you will want to inform other members of your group who had worked with him.

I shall look forward to seeing you in New York in June.

Sincerely,

M. W. Goding
High Commissioner

PRELIMINARY STATEMENT OF THE MEDICAL SURVEYS OF THE RONGELAP
AND UTIRIK PEOPLE IN MARCH 1963, NINE YEARS AFTER EXPOSURE TO
FALLOUT RADIATION

In March 1963 a medical survey team consisting of 10 physicians and technicians representing the Atomic Energy Commission and 10 from the Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands, visited the Rongelap and Utirik atolls and carried out a medical survey of the people who had been exposed to fallout radiation in 1954. An unexposed group on Rongelap who served as a comparison population were also examined. Since complete analysis of the data will take months, the following preliminary statement is made at this time.

On arrival of the team in the Marshall Islands, a serious epidemic of poliomyelitis Type I, with many paralytic cases, was in progress. However, the epidemic had been brought under control by widespread immunization with Sabine oral vaccine. There were 22 cases among the Rongelap children with varying degrees of paralysis and the disease had also affected three adults on the island with one death from bulbar paralysis of a 67 year old woman in the exposed group. Fortunately the people of Utirik were spared the epidemic.

Otherwise the medical examinations of both Rongelap and Utirik people revealed they were generally in good health and appeared to be in a better state of nutrition and with less skin disease than has been noted previously. About the same incidence of diseases was noted in the exposed population as in the unexposed comparison population. ⁹ [No cases of cancer, leukemia or other diseases believed to be enhanced by radiation exposure were noted. No evidence of any malignant change in the residual radiation (beta) burns of the exposed Rongelap people was noted. In several cases, these areas of the skin showed further development of pigmented (mole-like) changes, which however are not considered serious complications. A number of biopsies of the skin were obtained for detailed study. Several children in the exposed Rongelap group continued to show slightly retarded growth and development but otherwise appeared to be healthy.

During the past year on Rongelap four deaths had occurred in the exposed group; three in older people (one of whom was referred to above - died from polio) and one in a young man whose death was associated with a fall from a coconut tree. Two deaths had occurred in the unexposed group. None of these deaths appeared to be related to radiation exposure. One stillbirth with congenital abnormalities was born to exposed parents, the significance of which is being investigated. The usual number of healthy babies were born to both exposed and unexposed groups. Aside from the epidemic of poliomyelitis at Rongelap, the only other epidemics worthy of note were gastroenteritis of a rather severe nature among several children who were treated successfully and a few cases of sickness from eating arrow root flour (which probably had not been properly prepared).

Vital statistics of the people of Utirik during the past three years since last seen were not remarkable with mortality and causes of death and the number of births about the same in the exposed and unexposed groups. No unusual epidemics or types of disease that might be associated with radiation effects had occurred on Utirik.

There was excellent cooperation of both Rongelap and Utirik people in carrying out examinations and the friendly relationship between the examining group and the people was most gratifying. This spirit was believed to be enhanced by the fact that prior to the surveys, meetings were held with the people about the examinations and their purpose, and at the end of the surveys, they were informed of the general results. The people were most appreciative of the things done for them and particularly enjoyed the movies, music, and the "going away party" that the team provided.

R. A. Conard, M.D.

A. Hicking, M.D.