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ATOMIC ENERGY COMMISSION

SEVENTH MEDICAL SURVEY OF THE MARSHALL ISLANDERS

Note by the Secretary

The General Manager has requested that the attached memorandum and enclosure from the Director of Biology and Medicine be circulated for the information of the Commission.

W. B. McCool

Secretary

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Office Memorandum • UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT

TO : A. R. Luedecke, General Manager
THRU : A. Tammaro, Assistant General Manager for Research and Industrial Development
FROM : C. L. Dunham, M.D., Director, Division of Biology and Medicine

DATE: May 4, 1960

SUBJECT: SEVENTH MEDICAL SURVEY OF THE MARSHALL ISLANDERS

SYMBOL: BTM:HDB

The attached is Dr. Conard's summary of the latest survey of the health status of the Marshall Islanders carried out in March 1960 by Dr. Robert A. Conard, Brookhaven National Laboratory.

It is a pleasure to note that no evidence of biomedical radiation effects are reported.

Dr. Conard seems to have solved very effectively the problems created by the former annual invasion of the Islands by a too-large survey party. The cooperation of the local medical contingent was effective and generally satisfactory.

Attachment:
Summary

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BROOKHAVEN NATIONAL LABORATORY
Associated Universities, Inc.
Upton, L.I., N.Y.

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

Dear Chuck:

I would like to briefly summarize for you some of the highlights of the recent survey. Everything really went very smoothly and I was quite pleased at the fine spirit of cooperation shown by the Trust Territory officials.

Bill Scott (medical technician from Brookhaven) and I arrived at Kwajalein March 9th. Dr. Ezra Riklon, the practitioner at Ebeye, had rounded up about ten Rongelap people now residing there for examination. Drs. Fennel and Shippey, in charge of the Kwajalein Hospital, were most cooperative and allowed us to use their facilities for the examinations. They were also kind enough to loan us several items which we needed for use at Rongelap. Mr. William White, at present the DISTAD assistant at Kwajalein, whom you probably remember well, was also very helpful. He had our three medical boxes which had been shipped in custody.

The Navy flew us to Majuro on the 12th. Dr. John Iamen, the medical practitioner who has taken Dr. Hicking's place at Majuro, had rounded up several Rongelap people to be examined as well as a few children for height and weight measurements as part of the growth and development control group. These examinations were completed the following day.

Mr. Maynard Neas, Dr. H. B. Macdonald and I carried out final arrangements for the survey at Rongelap. The survey team consisted of the following people in addition to Dr. Macdonald, Bill Scott and myself: Dr. Ezra Riklon, Dr. Isaac Lanwi and two technicians, Kiosan and Sabio, and in addition, Dr. Jaffe and one of his dental technicians went along to carry out dental examinations. Mr. Neas also accompanied the group. He went along apparently to look into the agricultural situation on Rongelap. We sailed on the Rogue, the Trust Territory cargo ship, on Wednesday morning the 16th, arriving at Kwajalein one day later where we picked up Dr. Ezra and our three medical boxes which contained mainly the electronic Coulter counter and laboratory equipment. We did not sail for Rongelap until the afternoon of the 18th since, in view of Captain Robert's unfamiliarity with Rongelap lagoon, he wished to arrive at a time when the sun would be to his back as he entered the lagoon in order to steer through the coral heads. When we dropped anchor in the lagoon off Rongelap village on Saturday afternoon, Mr. Neil Morris, the agriculturalist who had been living on the island for the past year, and the new magistrate (Enos) came aboard. Enos indicated that the Rongelap people would like to have a meeting and ask us certain questions before commencing with the examinations.

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Therefore, Mr. Meas, Dr. Macdonald and I met with the people for an hour or so that afternoon. Many of the same types of questions came up that have come up in the past regarding their present health status, etc. They were particularly curious as to why the AEC medical team had joined forces with the Trust Territory medical group and wanted to know if this was an indication that they were well and required no further study. It was explained to them that since the Trust Territory doctors were their usual doctors, it was thought better to combine forces for the annual examinations and this did not mean that further examinations were unnecessary. The subject of the coconut crabs was reintroduced and I assured them that we were examining these crabs at intervals and as soon as they were safe for eating, we would let them know. This continued restriction on the crabs seems to irk them no end. There were only one or two people, chief of whom was [redacted] the health aide, who seemed to be against being examined. (He later agreed to be examined.)

The rest of that afternoon was spent in setting up the laboratory and organizing the school building for the physical examinations. The next day being Sunday, the examinations were not started until Monday. On Monday morning the people flocked in in greater numbers than we could handle and their attitude was entirely friendly and cooperative. There were only one or two at most who would not cooperate. We carried out the hematological examinations which included WBC done on the electronic Coulter counter, and smears were taken and stained for differentials, basophil counts and alkaline phosphatase determinations. A brief history was taken by Dr. Ezra and Drs. Macdonald, Isaac and myself carried out brief physical examinations on all the exposed people. A limited number of urines were collected for radiochemical analysis. There were no cases of cancer, leukemia or any other significant findings on examination of the exposed people, nor were there any elevated white counts which were significa

It appeared to me that the attitude of the people was, if anything, better this year. There seemed to be some vague knowledge on the part of the people of a possible suit against our government and this was mentioned in the meeting referred to. However, they did not seem to have any specific facts in this regard and indeed appeared to be very ill informed about any details of the suit.

Mr. Meas met with the people on several occasions and inspected their agricultural progress. He was pleasantly surprised at how much had actually been accomplished and seemed to feel that the attitude of the people was much better than he had expected.

We sailed for Kwajalein the evening of the 24th, stopping by Lae Atoll en route and arriving at Kwajalein on Saturday morning the 26th. We caught a Hawaiian Airlines plane (which has replaced MATS) back to Hawaii the following night.

In conclusion it appeared to me that the survey as carried out with the Trust Territory this year was highly successful and from the point of view

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of everyone concerned, is a happy solution to the problem. We are investigating the possibility of taking the steel room along next year in the cargo hole of the Roque. I hope this will work out.

I hope this brief resume will give you some of the highlights of the survey. Warmest regards,

Sincerely,

Robert A. Conard, M.D.

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