

TO:
FROM:

Louis L. Sturgeon, Chairman
E. E. Nichols, General Manager

May 27, 1954

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Worce Salisbury, Director
Division of Information Services

AP REPORTER'S VISIT TO MARSHALL ISLANDS

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

SYMBOL: DPM:LS

Bill Naugh, Associated Press reporter at Honolulu, at the direction of the New York AP office, requested permission to visit Bikini to interview the natives evacuated from Eniwetok and Ujae, and to go to Mjuro to talk with native representatives at that island about the Marshallese petition. Request for Naugh's visit was relayed from the Navy Department on May 17, 1954 with a message that the High Commissioner of the UN Trust Territory had approved the visit. The Navy was agreeable to furnishing transportation provided the AEC and DOD approved.

After consultation with the Office of Public Information, Department of Defense and with the Director of Division of Military Applications and the General Manager, we agreed that the AP man should be permitted to make the trip provided his articles were subject to review because:

1. With authority from the High Commissioner to make the visit, the AP representative could hardly be denied military or trust territory transportation to make the visit.
2. It would be more advantageous for the government for the Associated Press, the most reliable of U. S. news agencies, to cover the story under approved conditions than for a sensational type reporter to visit the areas without air handling.

It is therefore suggested in the Navy's furnishing transportation provided the AP agreed to submit material to Washington for review prior to publication by the Department of Defense and AEC. It is our understanding from the Washington AP Bureau that Naugh already has started his trip and that his copy will be transmitted to Washington by Navy radio facilities when he returns to Honolulu with a story.

On May 25, 1954 General Chaborn, in connection with the visit by the AP reporter, recommended that he furnish the AP reporter information on the events affecting the natives to prevent inaccuracies and misinterpretation of material the reporter would obtain during his visit.

In reply to this suggestion, the Joint Task Force prepared, and Military Applications and Information reviewed, a message to General Chaborn containing the following material for the guidance of the AP reporter, but not for attribution to official sources:

COPY FOR DR. BUCHER, DPM

Access # 326-78
Box 3
File = NMPB-B

CONFIRMED TO BE UNCLASSIFIED
AUTHORITY: DODIG 6A-20
BY H.R. SUMMERS DATE: 6/20/94
ARRJLH

Louis L. Struss, Chairman
K. B. Eshala, General Manager

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" On March 1, the first detonation of test series took place. As AEC Chairman Struss 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 Utrik 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 AGFT.

"This evacuation of 82 Rongelap natives, 144 Utrik natives and 28 U. S. personnel from Rongerik to Naval Station at Rujalein 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.

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

"A medical unit from Naval Medical Research Institute and other service agencies began operations at Rujalein on March 8. They made frequent periodic blood counts, urinalyses and other observations. This unit returned to the U. S. from Rujalein early this month when it became evident that all exposed natives and U. S. personnel would recover without serious consequences. The 23 Americans who were exposed on Rongerik Island were kept under medical observation at Rujalein 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.

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

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

Louis L. Strauss, Chairman
E. B. Nichols, General Manager

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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 Utorik 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 Utorik natives in their homes at this time.
- B. The radioactivity level at Rongalap, while low, will not permit return of natives at this time. The contamination will decay and will be down to acceptable levels by May 1955. In order that the Rongalap natives may be comfortable and properly cared for while they await return to their homes the AEC contractor (Holmes & Narver) are constructing on Ujaire Island of Majuro Atoll a new village of wood and aluminum dwellings and other buildings. This construction will be financed by JTF SEVEN. The Rongalap natives will be moved from Kwajalein to their new homes at Ujaire when this construction is finished early in June.
- 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 islets. The Rongalap natives will be returned to their homes as soon as possible and they will be furnished, as in the case of the Utorik natives, water and food supplies."

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.K. 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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