

AIRGRAM

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FROM: Secretary of State

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TO: Ambassador TOKYO G-56

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AIR

There follows text Colonel Lechause's summary report team's findings re reported radioactivity aboard Takuyo Maru. Embassy at its discretion may make whole report available for release.

Would appreciate Embassy's views re most appropriate means releasing report.

Summary Report as Rendered by Colonel Lechause:

1. Ships records confirm that Takuyo Maru was at position quoted in Japanese advisories (July 11, 2000 Tokyo Standard Time—153 degrees 45 minutes East, 12 degrees 23 minutes North proceeding on course West of South) when they experienced a rain squall beginning at 2000 and lasting 30 minutes. During this time their radiation levels increased to about 15 times background readings. Satuma Maru was at this time at 151 degrees East, approximately West of the Takuyo. Satuma did not pass through any squall. According to the account of the Takuyo Captain, he, acting upon advice from Tokyo, initiated decontamination procedures on his personnel and ship the following morning. Monitoring of the Satuma was first done at Rabaul using the Takuyo's instruments. The Satuma had a geiger counter but was not concerned over any readings.

2. Complete examination of both vessels (including ropes and canvas) revealed essentially only background radiation dose rate level on exposed decks and equipment. Readings in all enclosed spaces above and below decks were lower than background. Rabaul background readings taken ashore were 0.06-0.07 milliroentgens per hour, beta and gamma.

3. In view of the above findings, no further decontamination procedures were considered necessary or advised. (As a note of interest, a brass colored fuse setting ring and gunsight on the same gun the Satuma showed 10 milliroentgen per hour, beta and gamma, and a 1.2 gamma only milliroentgen per hour reading. Both of these were covered by canvas during the entire voyage. The Satuma Captain humorously offered the information that this metal was of United States origin.)

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Comments

NA - Mr. Bane

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4. The medical history as obtained from the respective ships' physicians and medical technicians and from the personnel themselves (confirmed by the Australian Regional Medical Officer, New Guinea Islands, Charles Haszler, M.D.) revealed that no personnel on either ship presented any complaints of illness to the ships' doctors. However, upon arrival at Rabaul, two people were examined by Dr. Haszler at the request of the Takuyo Maru's physician. These individuals were not considered to have any symptoms of radiation sickness by Dr. Haszler or by us following our later examination. Detailed reports part of written report to follow.

5. Original records and reports of Dr. Haszler in our possession, include total white blood count and urinalysis for all personnel on both ships, as well as special and repeated examinations of seven men from each ship. Dates for one or more of these examinations were July 19, 21, 23. Our complete examinations were done on July 26 on 12 persons from each ship including the seven persons done repeatedly by Dr. Haszler and five others chosen for the lowest white blood cell counts reported by the Japanese physicians and/or Dr. Haszler. Complete medical histories, within the limits of language difficulties, (interpreters available but effectiveness not one hundred percent), and complete physical examinations (excluding genitalia and rectum) done, including personnel monitoring for radiation contamination and any evidence of beta injury. Blood examinations included red and white cell counts, smears for white cell differential examination being forwarded to Armed Forces Institute of Pathology, Washington, D.C. Sahli (sic) hemoglobin done, venous blood on seven people and 24 hour urines on seven being forwarded to Lt. Col. James Hartgering, Walter Reed Army Institute of Research, for possible evidence of radioactivity.

6. Our on the spot blood examinations show as follows: The two individuals referred to in paragraph 4 had, respectively, hemoglobin, red blood count and white blood count of 108 percent, 5.2 million and 4700 and 76 percent, 3.16 million and 5700. Previous white blood count differential showed, respectively polymorphs, 58 percent and lymphocytes, 38 percent, monocytes, 4 percent; polymorphs, 63 percent, lymphocytes, 29 percent and monocytes, 8 percent. Urines negative except for few pus cells per high power field. Both had no specific complaints, good appetite and were actively performing their duties. Only other hemoglobin reading under 92 percent was one of 86 percent. In all, four red blood cell counts under 4.5 million, 9 over 5 million, and remaining one one between 4.5 and 5 million.

7. Our white blood cell counts on July 26 show only one below 4100 (3350), and we have no explanation for this. His hemoglobin was 106 percent and red blood count 4.63 million. No complaints and physical examination essentially negative. For remainder, read two columns as follows: Column One: 4100, 4200, 4300, 4400, 4500, 4600, 4700, 5000 to 7500, 7500, to 9000, 9000 to 11,800; Column Two: One each, one each, zero each, two each, one each, one each, one each, six each, seven each and three each.

8. Medical summary and conclusions: A. There is no evidence at this time of any detectible effects resulting from exposure to ionizing radiation. B. There was no detectible evidence of radiation contamination of personnel at the time of examination. C. There have been no cases of radiation sickness on either vessel. Any complaints of illness subsequent to July 14 were due to other causes, for example, infectious hepatitis or other intercurrent illnesses. D. There will be no detectible effects resulting from the minimal radiation exposure experienced. E. There is no medical indication for restriction of the normal activities of any of the personnel of either vessel.

9. General: A. At the insistence of both Captains that their headquarters required them to obtain from team in writing a statement prior to approval by Tokyo of their departure from Rabaul and to obviate any possibility of even slight impairment of what we considered a most friendly and mutually beneficial relationship by a denial of the request, the following was given to them: "As a result of our examination of the Takuyo and the Satsuma and of the personnel, our findings do not indicate evidence of radiation sickness or any contamination of either vessel which should delay your departure or normal use of the vessels or equipment either now or in the future."

"We are very desirous of conveying to you and all your personnel and to your headquarters our most sincere appreciation of everyone's complete cooperation and personal friendliness and help."

"It has been our pleasure to have had this opportunity of meeting you personally and working with you."

"We wish to express our thanks and sincere best wishes to you and all your people and wish you a safe and pleasant voyage home."

B. Despite severe but not unexpected pressure by local and Australian press, the only comment made by the Team (Lechasse) was to the effect that "our findings in general confirm those of the local authorities". Both

the Regional Administrator, Mr. J. R. Poldi, and Dr. Haszler had daily contact with the press and Port Moresby radio. Copies of Rabaul, Port Moresby and Sydney news stories are a part of our records. Mr. Poldi also has at our request received assurance from Moresby radio that they will supply transcripts of all broadcasts which he will forward to Commander Joint Task Force Seven.

C. Unsolicited information offered by Mr. Gus Smiles, local and Australian press reporter, was to the effect there was an unidentified Japanese press representative on board one of the ships and that he was filing despatches. Furthermore, that the Rabaul communications people had received advice "five weeks previously that this Japanese newsmen would be in Rabaul and the request made that courtesy be extended to him, including transmission of collect messages".

Documented written report is being prepared by Lechause for forwarding earliest.

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