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**Department of Energy**

Nevada Operations Office

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N. C. Aquilina, MGR, NV

REPORT ON THE DOE/RONGELAP MEETING TO FOSTER BETTER RELATIONSHIPS AND DISCUSS ISSUES RELATIVE TO THE RESETTLEMENT OF RONGELAP - LLNL - MARCH 8-9, 1989

ATTENDEES

Key Rongelap Officials; their advisors; RMI officials; DOE officials; and national laboratory DOE program heads. A complete list is included as attachment A. The agenda is included as attachment B.

Opening Remarks

John Rudolph welcomed the group, acknowledged Mr. Wieman's key role in bringing about the meeting, and affirmed DOE's desire to communicate better with the Rongelap Community and RMI, and to help break down some of the distrust that has developed. Mr. Weiman and Senator Anjain expressed similar views. Senator Anjain expressed his desire to have two basic questions answered:

1. Is Rongelap safe?
2. What is the health status of the residents?

Roger Ray presented some historical background, beginning with the U.S.'s realization in the 1970's that certain duties had to be discharged as the process of terminating the trusteeship began. DOE undertook a comprehensive radiological survey of Enewetak atoll and a cleanup took place. In doing this, many technical innovations were developed and DOE undertook a comprehensive survey of the entire Marshall Islands to:

1. Get the best current estimates of the radiological condition of the atolls and islands, put this into dose estimates, and get this information to the new government.

DOE  
John Rudolph's Files  
R-File  
Marshall Islands 1989

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2. Identify to them any conditions or recommendations as to potential restrictions on food, soil, or air.
3. Give assurances to communities.

DOE briefed the Marshalls officials prior to the 1978 survey and carried out the promise of visiting each community to explain the results and answer questions. In response to Mr. Franke's question, it was pointed out that the lines of communication have been and remain open between BNL and LLNL as to data from whole body counting missions.

The issue of distrust was raised in response to Mr. Weiman's comment that DOE distrusted the Rongelap people. It was forcefully stated that DOE did not and does not distrust the people.

#### RADIATION PROTECTION GUIDELINES

Dr. Meinhold then made a presentation on Radiological Protection Guidelines (attachment C). It was pointed out that while current U.S. guidelines are 170 mr a year and 5 rem for 30 years, EPA's guidelines to people living in houses with radon gas do not call for consideration of action levels under 1000 mr year. The point being that guides for radiation exposure must be looked at along with many other factors that effect life-style.

#### PLUTONIUM

Dr. Meinhold then made a presentation on Pu as a contributor to dose on Rongelap (attachment D). The presentations in my view can be summarized:

1. Pu exists on Rongelap in very small amounts.
2. It is extremely difficult to accurately measure minute amounts of Pu because of sampling contaminates and the fact that radioactive elements exist in the reagents, glassware, water, etc. All have naturally occurring radioactivity.
3. Nothing we have found to date indicates there was, or is a Pu problem which would prevent the safe habitation of Rongelap.

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4. Our September 1988 sampling tends to further support this but we should have a much more definitive answer in the fall of 1989 after the BNL sampling mission in July when sampling protocols will be more rigidly controlled in a "clean" environment.

#### DOSE COMPARISONS

Dr. Robison then showed comparisons of the Rongelap doses with that of other places in the world (attachment E). Key points were that living now on Rongelap could result in substantially less dose than living in many other parts of the U.S. or other countries. Also, that LLNL's dose predictions for Rongelap have been confirmed by BNL's actual physical measurement of the people by whole body counting and by urine analysis for Pu.

Senator Anjain, brought up the oft raised issue of why, in the bilingual DOE 1982 Report (pp 7-8), does it show Rongelap atoll to have similar numbers (2, 3, and 4) to Bikini, and we say Rongelap is safe but Bikini is not. The answer that has been given many times is that the numbers assigned on those pages of the Report are indeed misleading, however, the number 3 for example represents a large range of radiation levels. The fact is that as set forth in the definitive 5 volume report, Bikini island has substantially higher levels of radioactivity than Rongelap Island. It was not clear to me that Senator Anjain and his advisors understood or accepted this.

#### MEDICAL FINDINGS

Dr. Adams presented medical information (attachment F).

It was made clear that BNL does not do medical research in the Marshall Islands. It provides clinical medicine to the exposed people of Rongelap and Uterik as mandated by law. Also, because of agreement with RMI and more importantly because of humanitarian reasons, BNL sees, evaluates, and treats any resident of those atolls as time and facilities permit during the mission.

#### INFANT DOSE AND MITIGATION TECHNIQUES

Dr. Robison than presented on Infant Dose (attachment G) and mitigation techniques (attachment H).

RONGELAP ADVISOR POSITION

Mr. Franke then presented on the Pu issue. His basic thesis was that Rongelap has a Pu problem and he does not think we can yet say Rongelap is safe (attachment I). He stated that Pu data was not given adequate consideration when giving the 1982 Report to the Rongelap People.

Senator Anjain said that according to a DNA report, the U.S. fired BRAVO in 1954 knowing that the winds were blowing towards Rongelap.

SUMMARY DISCUSSIONS

John Rudolph summarized DOE's position in response to Senator Anjain's opening questions:

1. In our view Rongelap is radiologically safe.
2. DOE is confident that its dose estimates are correct. Acknowledging thyroid and some other problems which could be attributed to the acute exposure received in 1954, there is no medical evidence that living on Rongelap since 1957 indicates any significant difference between exposed or non exposed as to survivability, cancer, or genetic defects.

Senator Anjain expressed frustration because DOE told him Rongelap was safe and his advisor (Mr. Franke) questions those conclusions. Who is he to believe? They want a "second opinion." It was pointed out by Harry Brown that perhaps since Dr. Kohn's report also said Rongelap Island was habitable that maybe what Senator Anjain was seeking was a "third opinion." It was stated that DOE's work was all peer reviewed and open to the public. DOE has had at least 4 "independent reviews" of its Marshall Islands work over the last decade, and if RMI wants more of a response to Mr. Franke's presentation they should make that request to DOE.

John Rudolph replied to Senator Anjain's statement that we were not really in the Marshall Islands for health care by stating that we have responsibility for, and carry out clinical care for the exposed people and we try to examine and treat anyone else who needs or requests care as time permits. Rudolph also stated that although we agreed to this meeting with the Rongelap representatives, DOE in the future wishes and intends to conduct the interfaces on a government-to-government basis through the

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RMI. He also requested back all copies of BNL urine analysis data which had individuals ID numbers on them, which had been previously provided to Mr. Weiman.

Roger Ray remarked that the U.S. put the people back on Rongelap in 1957 believing the island to be safely inhabitable. He has seen nothing to change that view and is confident that if this were a U.S. decision pertaining to U.S. citizens that the conclusion would be the same. He also affirmed that the BNL clinical program conducts as much humanitarian medical assistance as time allows for non exposed people under a long standing (1974) agreement by DOE with Marshall Island authorities. Also, to Senator Anjain, that the total background to the decision on firing BRAVO was not available in the referred to publication because of classification reasons. Roger has documents (now declassified) that detail the process and explain the surprise of a yield 2-3 times expected and what happened in the stratosphere above the 40,000 ft. level. The lower level winds, which were expected to be those carrying debris could not have carried radioactive debris as far as Rongelap.

The meeting concluded with general feelings that although there are some substantial remaining differences, much more understanding was gained.

#### WRITERS CONCLUSION

I have not written this as a technical expert, and acknowledge that I may not have properly stated all that was said or implied.

In regard to any future radiological characterization of Rongelap and conclusions therefrom, I suggest and recommend that given continued distrust of DOE's recommendations by the Rongelap leadership and with all the questions raised on our methods, etc., anymore follow on work, exclusive of our ongoing Pu and radioactive protection program, should be done by an outside entity. We should not undertake that which Mr. Franke suggests unless we agree that it must be accomplished. Let some other qualified entity determine whether they believe it is needed, and if so, do it.

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It would certainly be more believable to the Rongelap people if that other entity addresses Franke's views contrasted with ours. We could assign LLNL and BNL to monitor that undertaking--methods, etc. Maybe it is time we do the independent review!

Original Signed By  
HARRY U. BROWN

Harry U. Brown  
Deputy Program Manager  
Office of Emergency Response  
and Program Analysis

cc:

J. E. Rudolph, HQ (DP-242) GTN  
W. H. Adams, BNL, Upton, NY  
C. B. Meinhold, BNL, Upton, NY  
W. L. Robison, LLNL, Livermore, CA  
D. L. Wheeler, HPDW, NV

## PARTICIPANTS

SENATOR JETAN ANJAIN	RONGELAP
MAYOR WILLIE MWETO	RONGELAP
SENATOR MICHAEL KABUA	EBON, RONGELAP
DAVID WEIMAN	RONGELAP REPRESENTATIVE (DC)
BERND FRANKE	RONGELAP CONSULTANT
ROBERT LANE	RONGELAP CONSULTANT
JOHN RUDOLPH	DOE
HARRY BROWN	DOE
BILL JACKSON	DOE
CHIEF SEC. OSCAR de BRUM	RMI
PETER OLIVER	RMI
ROGER RAY	DOE CONSULTANT
DR. WILLIAM ADAMS	BNL
CHARLES MEINHOLD	BNL
WILLIAM ROBISON	LLNL
DR. HENRY KOHN	RMI

## AGENDA

DOE/RMI/RONGELAP MEETING  
LAWRENCE LIVERMORE NATIONAL LABORATORY  
LIVERMORE, CA

MARCH 7-9, 1989

STATUS OF RONGELAP REASSESSMENT - FOLLOW-ON TO THE  
RONGELAP REASSESSMENT PROJECT REPORT

## WEDNESDAY, MARCH 8

0800	BADGING (SEE DIRECTION SHEET)	
0830	OPENING REMARKS	J. RUDOLPH, RONGELAP REP.
0900	BACKGROUND & HISTORICAL REVIEW	R. RAY
0915	DISCUSSION	
0930	RADIOLOGICAL PROTECTION GUIDELINES	C. MEINHOLD
1000	DISCUSSION	
1015	Pu AS CONTRIBUTOR TO DOSE ON RONGELAP	C. MEINHOLD
1045	DISCUSSION	
1100	INFANT DOSE	W. ROBISON
1145	DISCUSSION	
1215	LUNCH - LLNL CAFETERIA (NO HOST)	
1330	MEDICAL FINDINGS	W. ADAMS

1400 DISCUSSION  
1415 REVIEW OF RONGELAP MITIGATION  
RECOMMENDATIONS W. ROBISON  
1445 DISCUSSION  
1500 BREAK  
1515 RONGELAP PRESENTATION  
1615 REVIEW OF DAYS PROCEEDINGS  
1630 ADJOURN

THURSDAY, MARCH 9

0830 RECONVENE  
- ADDITIONAL RONGELAP PRESENTATIONS  
- CONTINUE WEDNESDAY'S DISCUSSION  
1000 ADDITIONAL ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION  
1200 REVIEW & SUMMARY OF MEETINGS  
CONCLUSIONS DOE/RMI/RONGELAP  
1230 ADJOURN