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Department of Energy

Nevada Operations Office

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JUN 08 1984

Ambassador Fred M. Zeder  
Office for Micronesian Status Negotiations  
Washington, D.C. 20240

Dear Fred,

On numerous recent occasions, notably including Congressional hearings and the recent meeting of the UN Trusteeship Council, we have heard serious criticism of DOE's health care efforts in the Marshall Islands. Assertions of lack of concern on the part of the U.S. officials and the DOE sponsored physicians, of discriminatory treatment, of a "guinea pig" approach, of secrecy ... have often gone unchallenged, and I fear that at least some times they are believed. Ambassador Sherman's recent statement in New York was a good step, but we can never quite catch up with all of the cruel charges and characterizations.

I thought that you might be interested in reading the enclosed excerpts from a report to me of the most recent Brookhaven visit to the Marshall Islands. In reading it, remember that our mandate is to care for the Marshallese people who were exposed to the BRAVO event on March 1, 1954. Today the members of that group, recognized under Public Law 95-134, number 174. However, you will see that on this visit alone 434 people were seen, examined, and cared for. The list of specialties and of examination procedures is impressive, also.

The account of the medical evacuation is especially revealing. Being familiar with the almost nonexistent aviation ground support in the outer islands, you can appreciate that courage, determination, dedication, and caring had to have their parts to play in this incident which, but for this letter, would go by quietly and unnoticed. (By way of explanation, Liktanur is the name of our Marshall Islands support vessel; Monroe Wightman is the ship's engineer.) Let me assure you that in my 13 years of dealing with this program, such incidents and such responses have not been at all uncommon.

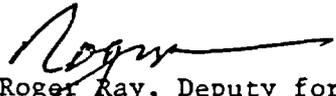
I suppose that we must expect those with political motives, those who would prosecute claims and lawsuits, and others with varying purposes of personal gain to put our efforts in the worst possible light. I regret, first, that the most vocal critics are my countrymen, second, that our physicians and other workers in the program (who are entirely apolitical and disinterested in the claims issues) are subject to the most unfair criticism and, finally, that the other real victims are the people we seek to care for and heal. Their fears are real, and they are made more painful when distrust and lack of confidence are sown among them by seemingly informed and educated observers.

Roger Ray's Files

Ambassador Fred M. Zeder

I send you this letter and enclosure in the hope that you will find this kind of background helpful when you are questioned regarding the good faith actions of the administering authority.

Sincerely,

  
Roger Ray, Deputy for  
Pacific Operations

Enclosure:  
As stated

EXCERPT OF LETTER REPORT

DATED MAY 25, 1984

A total of 434 complete examinations were performed (Table I). The following specialties and subspecialties were involved: endocrinology, gastroenterology, hematology, rheumatology, obstetrics/gynecology, neurology, and family practice. The physicians saw, in addition to the usual examinees, 53 persons (mostly children) on sick call and 15 persons referred from Marshallese Health Service physicians for consultation.

Table 1: March-April 1984 Examinations

Exam Location	Rongelap		Utirik		Bikini	Total
	Exp.	Unexp.	Exp.	Unexp.		
Ebeye	22	54	12	1	-	89
Majuro	12	21	35	2	42	112
Utirik	-	-	47	104	1	152
Rongelap	17	64	-	-	-	81
	51	139	94	107	43	434

A total of 1,411 laboratory procedures were performed:

Complete blood counts (including leukocyte differential and platelet counts)	467
Reticulocyte counts	5
Urinalysis - dipsticks	429
Microscopics	105
Stool examinations for parasites	40
Blood chemistries	
Blood sugars	77
Hb A <sub>1c</sub>	68
Na/K	4
BUN	2
Amylase	3
Creatinine	16
Calcium	5
Uric Acid	6
SGOT	10
Alkaline phosphatase	8
Bilirubin	7
Protein	10
Serologic test for syphilis	149
<b>Total:</b>	<b>1,411</b>

Other procedures included:	
Serum collection (for thyroid studies, etc.)	433
Special blood tests sent to Bio-Science	64
Electrocardiograms	14
X-rays (on 80 patients, including 8 IVPs, 3 gall-bladder studies and 1 barium swallow	225
Papanicolau smears (to Bio-Science)	220

\* \* \*

The most spectacular event of the trip occurred when one of our Utirik patients was air-evacuated at night to Kwajalein. Cyanotic and with a diagnosis of pulmonary edema the patient was being effectively treated and monitored by our team with IV's, EKG's, O<sub>2</sub> therapy, etc. When it appeared that she might have to be kept overnight on the Liktanur rather than being evacuated, Monroe Wightman appeared with a hospital oxygen flow-meter which, when attached to one of the Liktanur's large tanks, would have been sufficient for 24 hours (our own emergency O<sub>2</sub> system, to be used primarily during transport, would have lasted only 2 hours). When it was clear that Kwajalein was going to attempt a pickup of the patient after dark, the D.O.E.-Liktanur team outlined the coral landing strip with flares which would have been the envy of most small airports back home. After the Caribou crew was helped in freeing a nose-wheel from some sand, the patient, still receiving oxygen, was evacuated in the glare of a parachuted flare dropped by a circling C-130. One of our doctors plus a family member accompanied the patient. Pulmonary edema is often a reversible event if effectively treated, and the patient might have done satisfactorily if we had kept her. But once Kwajalein decided on the evacuation it is to the great credit of the D.O.E.-Liktanur team that it was successfully and smoothly carried out.

\* \* \*

One of the objectives of the Utirik-Rongelap visits was to test persons aged 15-35 years for syphilis. A recent extensive outbreak of syphilis on Ebeye is of great concern to the Marshallese Health Service, and we were requested by Dr. I. Kisino to screen for the disease and treat as indicated. As a result, 149 persons were tested and 4 new cases were uncovered. Treatment and tracing of contacts was performed with the help of a nurse from the Marshallese Health Service. I have sent Dr. Kisino a report of our findings.

There was a period of discomfort during our trip from Utirik to Rongelap when the steering cable separated. Fortunately this occurred in the open ocean, and the Liktanur crew was able to rapidly rectify the situation.

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