

MARSHALL ISLANDS FILE TRACKING DOCUMENT

Record Number: 2341

File Name (TITLE): Evacuation of Natives -
Operation Castle 6

Document Number (ID): AEE 597/43

DATE: 3/1954

Previous Location (FROM): DOE, EH-41 Chon.

AUTHOR: _____

Additional Information: _____

OrMIbox: 15

CyMIbox: 9

A 11

March 18, 1954

AEC 597/43

COPY NO. 14

ATOMIC ENERGY COMMISSION

EVACUATION OF NATIVES - OPERATION CASTLE

Note by the Secretary

The Division of Military Application has submitted the attached letter from the Commander, JTF-7, for the information of the Commission.

US DOE ARCHIVES
326 U.S. ATOMIC ENERGY COMMISSION
Collection SECRETARIAT
Box 4929
Folder MR+A 7 CASTLE Vol. 3

ROY B. SNAPP
Secretary

CLASSIFICATION CANCELLED
BY AUTHORITY OF DOE/OC
Carl Wilson 4/2/84
REVIEWED BY H. Schmidt 7/9/85
DATE 3/18/86
by: T. Feher

DISTRIBUTION

COPY NO.

Secretary	1
Commissioners	2-5
General Manager	7
General Counsel	8
Biology & Medicine	9
Information	10
Military Application	11-12 When separated from enclosures
Special Projects	13 handle this document as.....
Secretariat	14

~~TOP SECRET~~
~~CONFIDENTIAL~~
~~SECRET~~
~~CONFIDENTIAL~~
~~TOP SECRET~~

3 19-54
DU

~~TOP SECRET~~
~~CONFIDENTIAL~~
~~SECRET~~
~~CONFIDENTIAL~~
~~TOP SECRET~~

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

HEADQUARTERS
JOINT TASK FORCE SEVEN
OFFICE OF THE COMMANDER
Washington 25, D. C.

6 March 1954

COMD

MEMORANDUM FOR RECORD:

SUBJECT: Visit to Kwajalein, Friday, 5 March

1. Arrived Kwajalein 1000 hours and had an immediate conference with the following:

Rear Admiral Clarke, CO, Naval Station Kwajalein
Brig. General Estes, Commander, Task Group 7.4
Dr. Thomas White, Health Division, LASL
CDR L. H. Alford, USN, CO USS RENSHAW (DDE 499)
Members of Admiral Clarke's Staff
Local Representatives of Trust Territories

2. The following was determined:

a. The weather station detachment at Rongerik was evacuated by PBM on 2 March.

b. The DDE PHILLIPS entered the lagoon at Rongelap at daylight, 3 March, anchored near the village and evacuated at that place. The loading, of course, was easy compared with that at Utirik which took place on the lee side of the atoll over the reef in open sea.

c. The DDE RENSHAW evacuated the natives at Utirik at daylight, 4 March. The DDE was unable to enter the lagoon. Landing parties went ashore by motor whale boat and raft and were met by Trust Territory Representatives and interpreters who had arrived by seaplane from Kwajalein. All natives on Utirik were promptly evacuated to the destroyer where all but the old and feeble were given a bath. The children were scrubbed down first and thereafter the grown people entered the showers. The children apparently took great delight in playing around in the water.

d. Aboard the RENSHAW the natives were fed fish and rice and ice cream and ate heartily. They were returned directly to Kwajalein where they were examined by medical people and quartered temporarily in a vacant barracks. They are to be moved to a native village where they will be quartered in tents furnished by JTF SEVEN. No sickness was observed, nor was any expected, due to the comparatively low radiological exposure of this group. However, it was reported that some small children, after arrival at Kwajalein, showed a loss of appetite. This is attributed by

Department of Energy
Historian's Office
ARCHIVES

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

the medical officers to the change of diet and native food is being obtained from the nearby native settlement on the island next to Kwajalein Island.

3. On this trip to Kwajalein I took with me Dr. White of LASL and Major Crea from my staff who were to perform a water and soil sampling mission at a number of atolls, all of which had shown very low or no contamination on aerial survey. It was determined that certain atolls were extremely hazardous for seaplane landings. Since no material fallout had been indicated on any of the atolls and time was not a factor, the following arrangements were made while at Kwajalein with Admiral Clarke. The RENSHAW, then at Kwajalein, was ordered by CJTF SEVEN to depart at noon with Major Crea from JTF SEVEN staff to visit Kikiep, Jamo, Ailuk and Mejit to obtain samples. Major Crea was ordered also to check a Trust Territory ship (AKL) with approximately 50 persons aboard which arrived Utirik 1000 M, Tuesday, and departed 0700 M, Wednesday, and is now probably at Ailuk. This ship proceeded to Utirik direct from Kwajalein and most probably received no significant fallout. Dr. White was ordered to depart at noon on 5 March (M) by seaplane and perform similar sampling at Wotje, Erikub and Maloelap. It is expected that previous surveys by airplane of insignificant fallout on these atolls will be confirmed.

4. It was determined that Admiral Clarke at Kwajalein has taken every measure possible to cooperate. He has accomplished the following:

a. The previous night he and his staff warned all personnel at the movies and clubs that no news is to be allowed to leak out in regard to the fact that natives have been brought to Kwajalein from outlying atolls. It is certain that everyone on Kwajalein knows why these natives were brought in. All persons on Kwajalein saw the light in the sky and heard the explosion of the device. Soon afterward two destroyers arrived with the natives. One cannot hide two destroyers and some 250 natives at a place like Kwajalein.

b. Dungarees and other clothing were easily supplied to the male natives to replace clothing that had to be decontaminated. The matter of supplying clothing for the women and children was more difficult but the families at Kwajalein, when called upon, supplied more than was needed.

5. The natives are particularly interested in the following:

a. When they can get back to their home islands. They have been told that it would be in approximately two to four weeks. A final answer cannot be given until Rongelap and Utirik have been surveyed periodically over a period of time and it has been determined whether it is essential to keep them evacuated until the close of the operation.

b. The natives are concerned about their animals left behind. These consist of chickens and pigs. These animals are fed almost entirely copra (dried coconut meat). The main problem

Department of Energy
Historian's Office
ARCHIVES

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

an island adjacent to Kwajalein Island. Present prognosis is favorable and morale seems to be very good.

10. I discussed the problem with the senior naval medical officer at Kwajalein Naval Station who reported he had found no illness that could be attributed to radiation, although he is no expert in this field.

11. Admiral Clarke, the local Trust Territory Representative and members of Admiral Clarke's staff feel that it is out of the question to keep news of this event from leaking out. There are some 200 families at Kwajalein. There is no mail censorship. There is constant traffic on MATS through Kwajalein of transient personnel. I saw some 20 or more persons, mostly sailors, boarding a MATS aircraft bound for Hawaii. It is inevitable that many Trust Territory people must be consulted and involved in evacuating and caring for these natives.

12. I assured Admiral Clarke and the Trust Territory Representative that the Joint Task Force would stand any expense from Task Force funds over and above normal Naval or Trust Territory expenses. This would include rations, pay of interpreters, and the like. The Joint Task Force has already shipped 35 squad tents from JTF stocks to house the natives. I have had in mind that any natives who were stricken with radiation sickness should be air evacuated to Tripler Hospital. When questioned on this subject, the medical people anticipated there probably would be none with the one slight possibility of some of the young children having to be air evacuated to Tripler.

/s/

P. W. CLARKSON
Major General, USA
Commander

Department of Energy
Historian's Office
ARCHIVES