

Office Memorandum • UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT

TO : K. E. Fields, General Manager
(THRU) Brig. General Alfred D. Starbird
Director, Division of Military Application

DATE: April 23, 1958
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FROM : C. L. Dunham, M. D.
Director, Division of Biology and Medicine

SUBJECT: REDETERMINATION OF WHOLE BODY CONTAMINATION OF MARSHALLESE NATIVES

SYMBOL: BMM:HDB

As requested in General Luedecke's classified TWX of April 20 to General Starbird (received April 21/0221Z), staff members of the Division of Biology and Medicine, and of the Medical Department of Brookhaven National Laboratory have re-evaluated the advisability of resurveying the whole body contamination burdens of the Marshallese Islanders during the month of May 1958. It was the consensus of all concerned that the promptest resurvey possible would be in the best interests of the Commission, and the Departments of State, Interior and Defense.

In the event of any surface contamination of the atolls, a base line value of the degree and type of internal contamination by radioisotopes originating from the 1954 incident is almost mandatory. It should be possible to evaluate additional body burdens picked up under such circumstances or alternatively to prove that the present series has not added to the amount and composition of their present contamination.

The possible changes induced in the environment by a few shots may well not have influenced the natives appreciably by the time the resurvey can be made. Alternatively, if beginning changes are observed (based on memory of the original lost data), it may turn out to be most important that they be detected and evaluated.

The desirability of securing an extra year's scientific data for the purposes of completing the cumulative radiation doses to these natives is obviously desirable from a purely scientific point of view, but the above considerations are believed to be the over-riding ones.

It is, therefore, requested that General Luedecke's assistance be sought in accomplishing this resurvey along the lines suggested in his TWX of April 20 or by any other way which will expedite matters.

The teams, consisting of Dr. Robert Conard, Dr. James Robertson, and Mr. Daniel Potter, can be at Eniwetok with their equipment by May 7,

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provided that (a) MATS will be able to transport them and their equipment from the MATS New Jersey base all the way to Eniwetok; and (b) information can be quickly secured as to the electric power supply available on the assigned LCU; the electronic equipment operates on 115 volts A.C. and has accessory equipment for converting from 240 volts D.C. to 115 volts A.C. with a maximum power requirement of 5 kw.

If the equipment is shipped via commercial air freight, it must go via Northwest Airlines who carry freight only when there is a lack of passenger traffic. Thus, it may be in order in any case to request MATS transportation for the equipment and personnel so as to be assured of arrival at the appointed times.

Dr. Conard has indicated that he and his group would be willing to arrive at the earliest possible date, May 7, and so be ready to move to Rongelap if and when any vessel may become available.

Your assistance in carrying out this mission will be greatly appreciated.

CC: A. Tammaro, GM
R. A. Conard, BNL
Lt. Commander I.V. King, USN
Lt. Colonel S. Bach, AFSWP

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