

AUG 08 1979

Mrs. Ruth Van Cleve
Director, Office of
Territorial Affairs
Department of Interior
Washington, D. C. 20240

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Dear Mrs. Van Cleve:

I am pleased to respond to your letter of June 26, 1979, and its enclosure dated June 15, 1979, in which you address the issue of a medical survey of Likiep Atoll. This matter was raised by Mr. Anton DeBrum, Foreign Secretary, Government of the Marshall Islands, during the May 16 meeting on radiological problems in the Northern Marshall Islands.

Before proposing any action on this matter, we felt that it would be desirable to discuss the issue with Dr. Hugh Pratt of the Brookhaven National Laboratory (BNL) Medical Department. He returned from his last trip to the Marshall Islands on June 28, 1979. Prior to that time, however, we had sent copies of the results of the Marshall Islands Government's "local survey" of medical information from Likiep to BNL for their review. BNL has studied this information, and Dr. Pratt discussed the matter with Drs. Wachholz and Weyzen on July 6.

As an initial step, in a letter dated June 29, 1979, we requested the Department of Interior to obtain identification of those persons known to be on Likiep Atoll in March 1954. We are pleased to learn, via your letter of July 6, 1979, that a request for the information has been transmitted to the President of the Government of the Marshall Islands.

In addition, we propose the following course of action by the Departments of Energy and Interior:

- 1) That the Department of Interior request of the Government of the Marshall Islands such vital statistics (e.g., morbidity and mortality data) as might be available for residents of the Marshall

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Mrs. Ruth Van Cleve

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Islands generally and for residents of the atolls of Likiep, Wotje, Ailuk, Jemo, Mejit and Enewetak specifically, particularly for those who were on Likiep, Wotje, Ailuk, Jemo and Mejit atolls at the time of the testing.

2) That the Department of Interior obtain records of Trust Territory referrals of cancer cases to hospitals at Guam and Panope, and at the Trippler Hospital in Honolulu.

3) That the Department of Energy conduct a survey of the appropriate population of Likiep atoll as soon as possible, but probably in the October-December 1979 time frame. This survey would be based upon the information already obtained by the Marshall Islands Government, but would enlarge upon that in both form and substance. All relevant persons would be interviewed.

In addition, at the appropriate time we would request that the proper authorities in the Marshall Islands inform and explain to the appropriate people what activities and studies will be conducted, the reasons for them, and what the people may expect to occur.

The information obtained from Likiep and from the records requested should serve to indicate the extent to which populations on other atolls (e.g., Ailuk, Wotje, Mejit) similarly may need to be surveyed.

4) Depending upon information obtained via 1, 2, and 3 above, a medical team might be dispatched to the Likiep atoll during the first half of calendar year 1980 if indicated by results of the survey.

We feel that the above procedures--to identify the persons of potential concern, to obtain base line vital statistics, to obtain additional and more thorough information built upon the base already established prior to providing a medical team--will provide an assessment of and be responsive to the situation at Likiep in the most professional manner. We are preparing to move forward on item 3 above and will look forward to any information which can be obtained regarding 1 and 2 above, and the letter of June 29.

We trust that this proposed plan will meet the needs of the situation and be acceptable to the Department of Interior.

Sincerely,
Original signed by
Ruth C. Clusen
Assistant Secretary for Environment

bcc: Dr. Weyzen, OHER ← Ruth C. Clusen
Mr. Deal, OESD Assistant Secretary for Environment
Mr. McCraw, OESD
Dr. Pratt, BNL
Mr. Ray, NV
Wachholz's Files
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