



United States Department of the Interior

Marsh 2.5

OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20240

JUN 26 1979

Hon. Ruth C. Clusen
Assistant Secretary for Environment
Department of Energy
Washington, D.C. 20545

Dear Mrs. Clusen:

You will recall that at the May 16, 1979, meeting on radiological problems in the Northern Marshalls, Mr. Anton DeBrum, Foreign Secretary, Government of the Marshall Islands, raised the question of a medical survey of the people of Likiep Atoll to determine if they are, as he maintained, suffering from an unusually high rate of thyroid and related throat problems. At the meeting, both you and I stated that our two departments would discuss this matter.

Mr. DeBrum contacted my office on this matter several times during the ensuing weeks before his departure this past weekend. He was assured that our two departments were conferring on the matter but that we were waiting for Dr. Hugh Pratt to return to the United States from the latest Rongelap-Utirik survey, in order that his knowledge and advice also could be obtained.

At mid-day, Friday, June 15, Mr. Richard Copaken, Legal Advisor to the Marshall Islands Political Status Commission, phoned on behalf of Mr. DeBrum and asked if we could deliver a reply in writing by the close of business Friday to Mr. DeBrum since Mr. DeBrum was departing Washington the next day and did not believe that he could return to the Marshalls without some official word from us.

Mr. deYoung of my staff was able to discuss this request very briefly on Friday afternoon with Dr. Bruce Wachholz and Dr. Walter Weyzen. We then prepared a letter to Mr. DeBrum, and it was delivered to him late that afternoon. The letter stated that our two departments were conferring on the matter and while neither could give a definite reply as of June 15 as to the exact time of a possible medical survey on the makeup of a medical team, both organizations would move forward as promptly and expeditiously as possible on this matter. I enclose a copy of the June 15, 1979, letter to Mr. DeBrum for your information.

I believe it is essential that we move forward as quickly as possible now on this matter and I look forward to your comments.

Sincerely yours,

RUTH G. VAN CLEVE

Mrs. Ruth G. Van Cleve
Director
Office of Territorial Affairs

Enclosure 5011966

cc: Dr. Walter H. Weyzen