

Ataji Balos of the Congress of Micronesia of the Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands.

Congressman Balos' statements concern primarily three points: 1) that the United States "knowingly and consciously" allowed the people of Rongelap and Utirik to be exposed to fallout from the 1954 weapons test detonation; 2) that the Rongelapese have been inadequately compensated monetarily; and 3) that the medical care they have received subsequent to their exposure has been of questionable quality.

The assertion that the people were deliberately allowed to be exposed to fallout is categorically unacceptable. The site for the detonation and the conditions under which the detonation was to take place were selected with extreme care so as to prevent any adverse consequences, not only to the personnel involved in the tests but to the inhabitants of any distant islands surrounding the test area. Unfortunately, there was an unpredictable and unexpected shift in winds which carried the ensuing fallout into areas inhabited not only by Marshallese, but by personnel engaged in the test activity. This was not foreseen and in no way can it be considered deliberate.

The matter of compensation for the exposed islanders was considered by the 88th Congress of the United States and a bill was passed to provide for the settlement of claims of certain residents of the Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands. This act, Public Law 88-485, authorized payment of \$950,000 (less legal fees) by the Secretary of the Interior to the 82 exposed inhabitants of Rongelap or to their survivors. Each, or his heirs, received approximately \$11,000. Mr. Balos has stated that the 23 Japanese fishermen also exposed to fallout from the same incident received \$2 million dollars. This statement, however, is misleading. The Japanese Government did receive \$2 million dollars, and by agreement, it was left to the discretion of the Government of Japan as to how the money was to be apportioned among the various claimants

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Honorable Henry M. Jackson

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including components of the tuna industry, the port city involved, hospitals, and the fishermen. On the average, \$5,555 was distributed to each of the surviving Japanese fishermen, whereas about \$15,000 was provided as compensation for the fisherman who died within a short period after the incident.


The medical follow-up of the Marshallese people has been of major concern to the AEC. Very shortly after the incident occurred, the involved population was evacuated to Kwajalein Naval Base where they received extensive observation and care for several months. Subsequently, medical teams from the U. S. have examined these people on an annual basis. The primary late medical findings have related to thyroid abnormalities and where indicated, therapy has been provided. It is our intention to continue the medical surveillance of the Marshallese people and to provide whatever is needed for the health and well-being of the individuals involved.

This incident occurred in 1954 and during the subsequent years, there have been many developments that relate to it. In order to provide you with a more complete description of the events, we are enclosing a narrative summary covering the period to which Congressman Balos' comments are addressed.

If we can be of further service to you, please do not hesitate to let us know.

Sincerely,

(Signed) Enzi DeRenzis


General Manager

Enclosure:
AEC Staff Comments on Allegations
of Congressman Balos of the Congress
of Micronesia

bcc: JCAE
Chairman (2)
Commissioner Ramey
Commissioner Johnson
Commissioner Larson
Commissioner Doub
CM (2)
Cong. Rel. (2)
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