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August 22, 1958

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ATOMIC ENERGY COMMISSION

RADIATION INCIDENT INVOLVING JAPANESE SHIP

Note by the Acting Secretary

The General Manager has requested that the attached letter to the Joint Committee on Atomic Energy and memorandum from the State Department, with attachment, concerning an incident during the HARBACK series be circulated for the information of the Commission.

Harold D. Anamosa
Acting Secretary

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Jack H. Kahn
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UNITED STATES
ATOMIC ENERGY COMMISSION
WASHINGTON 25, D.C.

August 12, 1958

Mr. James T. Ramey
Executive Director
Joint Committee on Atomic Energy
Congress of the United States

Dear Mr. Ramey:

My letter of July 23, 1958, advised you of reported radioactivity aboard the Japanese ship TAKUYO MARU in the western Pacific and low white blood counts of ten of the ship's crew members. Subsequent developments in this incident are as follows.

The Joint Task Force SEVEN medical team consisting of medical and technical personnel arrived at the Port of Rabaul on July 25th. The team has completed an investigation of the incident and advises that their findings confirm those reported earlier by Rabaul authorities. The Rabaul authorities earlier reported that the situation aboard the TAKUYO MARU was not serious and that there was no reason to delay departure of the vessel from Rabaul.

The team has returned to Eniwetok and has submitted a report by wire on their findings. Their report of the investigation of the incident of alleged radioactive fallout on the Japanese ships TAKUYO MARU and SATSUMA MARU on or about July 14, 1958 discusses: (a) the physical contamination of the ships and crew members, and (b) the results of the medical examination of the Japanese crews.

From this report and other information it appears quite possible that the rainfall that occurred on the TAKUYO MARU did contain radioactive fallout from the tests at Eniwetok Proving Ground. The amount of this fallout was not sufficient to have caused radiation sickness in the crew members. The ship's log (TAKUYO MARU) stated there was an increase in radiation levels to about 15 times background readings. (Values higher than this are frequently observed in communities around the Nevada Test Site during weapons tests.) It is not clear at this time just how these measurements were taken, but even if they represented a 15 fold temporary increase in whole body

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exposure it would not have resulted in a total dose sufficient to produce even the minimum symptoms of radiation sickness. (Calculations made by the Japanese as reported in a previous wire from the American Embassy, Tokyo, of a maximum of 100 milliroentgens exposure to the crew may be somewhat high but not an impossible value. An exposure of 100 milliroentgens is about equivalent to that received each year from natural sources.)

The medical examinations showed no evidence of radiation injury. The lowest white blood count of 3,350 is below average but is not considered serious and counts in this range are occasionally seen under normal circumstances. The specific cause for this low count has not been determined, but it could be either (a) a normal count for this individual, or (b) the result of one or more of several causes. Other blood elements (red cells and hemoglobin) measured were all within normal ranges in all instances.

Sincerely yours,

/s/ Paul F. Foster

General Manager

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SPECIAL ASSISTANT TO THE SECRETARY OF STATE
WASHINGTON

August 14, 1958

MEMORANDUM FOR:

Admiral Paul F. Foster,
General Manager,
Atomic Energy Commission.

Subject: Exposure to Radiation of the Takuyo Maru and Satsuma Maru.

It gives me great pleasure to bring to your attention the attached telegram from Ambassador MacArthur concerning the conclusion of the recent "exposure" incident involving the Takuyo Maru and Satsuma Maru.

On behalf of the Department I should like to express appreciation for the expeditious handling of the matter by the Atomic Energy Commission. The many individuals involved in rendering the assistance referred to by Ambassador MacArthur are to be commended.

/s/

Philip J. Farley

Attachment:

AmEmbassy Tokyo's telegram
dated August 13.

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DEPARTMENT OF STATE

AUGUST 13, 1958

FROM: TOKYO

TO: Secretary of State

CURRENT PHASE OF INCIDENT INVOLVING EXPOSURE TO RADIATION OF TWO MSB SHIPS TAKUYO AND SATSUMA SEEMS ABOUT CONCLUDED. NOTEWORTHY HAS BEEN VERY RESPONSIBLE MANNER WITH WHICH GOJ HAS HANDLED QUESTION OF POSSIBLE RADIATION SICKNESS AMONG CREW MEMBERS, IN FACT TREMENDOUS PRESSURES FROM PRESS AND OPPOSITION TO BUILD UP THIS INCIDENT INTO ANOTHER FUKURYU MARU CASE AND CREATE MAJOR CONTROVERSY WITH US. JAPANESE GOVT HAS LENT WEIGHT OF ITS PRESTIGE AND INFLUENCE TO QUIET PUBLIC ANXIETY ABOUT CREW AND ESTABLISH THAT NO RADIATION EFFECTS WERE SUFFERED (EMBTEL 293). AS RESULT, EFFORTS BY PRESS AND LEFTISTS TO BUILD UP ATMOSPHERE OF HYSTERIA AND THEREBY DRAMATIZE JAPANESE DEMANDS FOR NUCLEAR TEST SUSPENSION HAVE FALLEN FLAT.

JAPANESE GOVT MAINTAINED ITS POISE THROUGHOUT THIS SITUATION AND THUS SUCCEEDED IN FRUSTRATING LEFTIST PLANS TO USE THIS INCIDENT TO CREATE SERIOUS DIFFICULTIES BETWEEN US AND JAPAN. HOWEVER, AS RESPONSIBLE JAPANESE OFFICIALS HAVE TOLD US, THEIR EFFORTS WOULD NOT RPT NOT HAVE SUCCEEDED WERE IT NOT RPT NOT FOR FULL AND EXPEDITIOUS COOPERATION OF US GOVT. PLEASE CONVEY MY PERSONAL APPRECIATION PARTICULARLY TO AEC AND ADMIRAL BURKE AND HIS PEOPLE FOR THEIR EXPEDITIOUS AND POSITIVE ASSISTANCE IN HANDLING THIS POTENTIALLY EXPLOSIVE INCIDENT.

MAC ARTHUR

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