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Rongelap, Marshall Islands
March 15, 1964

A Preliminary Statement Concerning the Medical Survey of the
Rongelap People Ten Years after their Exposure to Fallout Radiation.

In March 1964, a Combined Atomic Energy Commission and Trust Territory medical team carried out the annual survey of the people of Rongelap Island, 10 years after their accidental exposure to fallout radiation. Dr. T. Kumatori of the National Institute of Radiological Sciences, Chiba, Japan, who is in charge of the annual medical examinations of the Lucky Dragon fishermen involved in the same accident as the Marshallese, visited Rongelap for the survey. Dr. Robert Conard of Brookhaven National Laboratory, New York, who heads up the A.E.C. medical team, had visited Dr. Kumatori in Japan for examination of the exposed Japanese fishermen prior to the Rongelap survey.

The following statement concerning the results of the survey at Rongelap must be considered as preliminary in nature since most of the data collected has yet to be analyzed. During the past year the people have been well with no major epidemics of disease. The poliomyelitis epidemic which occurred during the 1963 survey has been controlled with no further spread of the disease. The usual number of cases of upper respiratory infections and gastroenteritis were reported. One death had occurred in a 108 year old exposed woman, presumably due to senility. The usual number of normal births in both exposed and unexposed groups were noted.

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The examinations of the people revealed that they were generally in good health with no apparent nutritional deficiencies. No evidence of cancer or leukemia was detected. Slight retardation of growth and development was again noted in some of the exposed children, particularly boys who were exposed at less than six years of age. Thyroid nodules were found in three exposed girls; these are being further evaluated. There were no illnesses that could be directly related to radiation exposure. Healed fallout burns of the skin, present in a number of people, showed no indication of ulceration or malignancy, though further pigmented changes such as nevus-like moles were noted. Analysis of blood counts must be awaited to see if the slight depression of blood counts previously noted still persists. Measurements of body burden of internally deposited radioisotopes will be estimated from urine samples obtained from the people. It is planned that equipment will be brought to Rongelap in 1965 to report direct body measurement of internally deposited radioisotopes.

Examinations of Rongelap people and Japanese fishermen exposed to fallout showed that similar effects of fallout exposure had occurred in both groups and that the doses of radiation received by the Rongelap people were generally about the same as received by the fishermen. Similar types of fallout burns of the skin were observed.

The usual friendliness and cooperation of the Rongelap people was again apparent during the present survey. A feast prepared jointly by the Rongelap people and the team members was enjoyed by all.

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The children received candy and toys. Movies were shown every evening; they were quite popular, particularly with the children.

During the survey the United Nations Mission to the Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands visited Rongelap.

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