

**EMBASSY OF THE REPUBLIC OF THE MARSHALL ISLANDS**

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Paul Seligman, M.D., M.P.H.
Deputy Assistant Secretary for Health Studies
Department of Energy
19901 Germantown Road
Germantown, Maryland 20874-1290

Dear Dr. Seligman:

Paul -

As you know, this is the time of year when we begin to make arrangements for our annual Government of the Republic of the Marshall Islands (RMI) and United States Department of Energy (DOE) meeting to discuss DOE's medical and environmental programs in the RMI.

In anticipation of the upcoming annual meeting, the RMI Government proposes that we meet in Hawaii on June 25-26, 1999. Our reason for proposing these dates is because several RMI Government officials are planning to attend meetings in Honolulu during the preceding week. If we could combine our meetings into one trip, this would lead to a sizable cost savings for the Government. Please let me know if these dates are convenient for you. Obviously, we would be pleased to arrange for another time if these dates do not suit you.

With regards to the content of the RMI-DOE annual meeting, there are several agenda items that the RMI Government proposes for discussion. In addition to any issues DOE would like to raise, the RMI would like to discuss:

1. Environmental MOUs: The RMI would benefit from a review of where we are with the atoll specific MOUs for the environmental programs. The RMI Government would like to see us replicate the process we employed with Rongelap in which the RMI national government, the local government and DOE worked together to reach consensus about the MOU.

2. DOE's contract with Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory. The RMI Government is interested in putting LLNL's contract to public bid as we did with the medical program. If communities in the RMI are planning to resettle, and if they are going to feel safe on their land, it is essential that they are assured that the information they receive about their environment serves their best interest. As I think you can appreciate, perceived conflicts of interest make it difficult for people to think their best interests are represented by a U.S. Government weapons laboratory.

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Before the complex, and difficult decisions regarding resettlement can be made, it is imperative for the RMI Government and the communities to have full confidence in DOE's environmental work and its recommendations. LLNL, along with universities, private and public institutions should be invited to participate in a public, transparent bidding process for DOE's medical contract. As we have said many times, this is in no way an attack or criticism of Dr. Robinson's work in the RMI. The RMI Government feels, however, that environmental restoration and planning for resettlement are complex issues that would benefit from a public bidding process. A public bid for the contract would enable the United States' best scientists to apply their creative ideas and newest techniques to the unique environmental challenges in the RMI.

3. A review of the new medical program by Drs. Palafox and Preston. We would like to hear about the successes and problems in the early phases of the doctors' work. The RMI Government is anxious to support the medical program and is interested in hearing any suggestions about ways the RMI Government can assist with the difficulties involved in beginning a new program. The RMI Government would also like to hear recommendations from Drs. Palafox and Preston about ways the RMI Government could strengthen its public health sector with regards to radiation related illnesses. For example, the notion of a cancer registry has often been discussed. The RMI Government would like to hear the doctors' opinions about the need and logistics of establishing a cancer registry in the RMI. The RMI Government is very pleased with the improvements made in the medical program.

4. A discussion of radiation worker safety in the United States. It is important for the contractors working on the resettlement programs in the RMI and for the RMI Government to understand more about the ways the United States protects its radiation workers.

5. A discussion of the definition of "exposed" and "unexposed." During our last meeting, it was decided that DOE would send the RMI a letter which would clarify the definition of these terms. If possible, we would like to receive this letter before the upcoming annual meeting. Because this issue remains unresolved, we would like to include it on the agenda for the upcoming meeting.

6. The status of the Center for Disease Control's nationwide thyroid study. The RMI Government would appreciate hearing an update about efforts to secure funding for this study.

7. Creation of a publicly accessible database. We have had several discussions about establishing a database the public can access in order to find cumulative exposure levels of people

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and the environment in the RMI, and information about medical and environmental monitoring. The RMI Government would like to hear from DOE about the feasibility of creating such a database, and how DOE envisions a project of this nature could go forward.

8. A briefing by the Marshall Islands Radiation Victims Association (MIRVA). The RMI Government would like to request a briefing by MIRVA. MIRVA is composed of individuals who worked on the atolls acutely affected by radiation in the Marshall Islands. Many of these workers lived and worked on Bikini and Enewetak atolls in support of U.S. Government clean-up efforts. Yet, because they do not have land rights on these atolls, the local governments of these atolls do not represent the worker's best interests. If there is no objection on your part, the RMI Government would like to include a representative from MIRVA on its delegation as MIRVA's radiation related problems are linked to Bikini and Enewetak Atolls.

I look forward to working with you to plan for this year's annual meeting. Perhaps we could meet during the week of April 5-11, 1999 to discuss the upcoming meeting. As always, thank you for your continued willingness to work together with the RMI on issues that affect the RMI and DOE.

Best wishes,


Banny de Brum
Ambassador

cc: Minister Phillip Muller
Minister Tony de Brum
Secretary Marie Maddison
Mr. Allen P. Stayman
Mr. Emil Skodon
Mr. Manase Mansur
Ms. Marie Howard-Fabrizio
Ms. Esther Kia'Aina