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HEADQUARTERS  
WEATHER REPORTING ELEMENT, PROVISIONAL  
APO 187, c/o Postmaster  
San Francisco, California

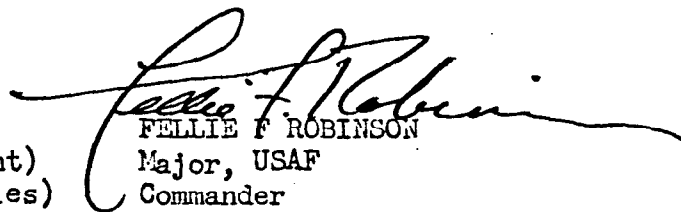
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27 MAR 1954

SUBJECT: Rongerik Incident

TO: Commander  
Test Services Unit, Provisional  
APO 187

Inclosed is a report of personnel of this element on events which occurred 1 March 1954 through 3 March 1954 concerning radioactive contamination of personnel at Eniwetak Island, Rongerik Atoll, M.I.

  
FELLE F ROBINSON  
Major, USAF  
Commander

- 3 Incls:
1. Rept (Rongerik Incident)  
by Maj Robinson (3Copies)
  2. Ltr fr Lt McDaniel to  
Maj Robinson, Subj: Evac of  
Rongerik Pers (3 Copies)
  3. Extract fr WOJG Kapral's  
Diary (3 Copies)

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RONGERIK INCIDENT

1 MAR 1954

I had no indications of any but usual operations from any of my detachments. Weather reports were coming a little late but considered excellent under the conditions. Example: Rongerik - 1 hour late, Ponape - 42 minutes, Kusaie - 1:05 late and Majuro - 11 minutes late.

About 2300 that night I received a message from my detachment at Rongerik DTG 010300Z as follows: "FOR JTF SEVEN ENIWETOK SMCLN PASS TO MR. BRESLIN PD AUTO MONITOR PRESENT READING IS ONE ZERO ZERO PLUS REPEAT ONE ZERO ZERO PLUS CMA PEN OFF CHART AND HAS BEEN IN THIS POSITION SINCE 0250 ZEBRA REQUEST ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF RECEIPT FROM BRESLIN SIGNED COMDR". Since I attended a Radiological-Safety course at Keesler AFB in February - March 1949, I realized that serious fall-out might have occurred. I awakened Col. Hammond, Test Services Unit Commander, whose quarters are in the next room to mine, and explained the possibilities. The communications center personnel had explained that they were unable to contact Mr. Breslin at Parry Island and had called me since they were unable to obtain the desired acknowledgement of the message. Since I did not know the relationship of the monitor reading to the radiation value (Roentgens) I could not evaluate the seriousness of the situation. However, to preclude any serious effects and to minimize the danger of exposure, I prepared a message to WOJG Kapral, my Officer in Charge at Rongerik as follows: "CEASE ALL OPERATIONS IMMED AND ALL PERS REMAIN INSIDE METAL BUILDINGS UNTIL FURTHER NOTICE PD MAINTAIN ROTATING SHIFT RADIO COMMUNICATIONS WITH 1DR FOR FURTHER INSTRUCTIONS PD ROBINSON SENDS". Major Montgomer, Executive for Test Services Unit was awakened and sent to the communications center to send out the message and wait there for further instructions from Col. Hammond. In the meantime we had called Col. Crosby

and Col. Houghton of TG 7.4 and Captain Chrestenson of the 4930th Test

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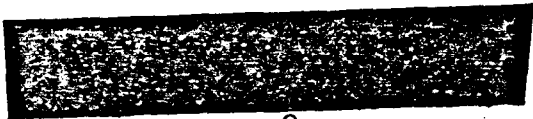
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Support Group, all concerned with radiological safety, and asked them to come over to my quarters for a conference. They arrived about the time Major Montgomery departed for the communications center. I also called Col. Miller of Task Group 7.1 to see if we could learn anything more definite on the seriousness of the situation. He informed me that Mr. Breslin was aboard the USS Estes and could not be contacted immediately. I requested that he make further efforts to evaluate the situation and let me know. Col. Hammond phoned Major Montgomery and asked him to relay the information in the original TWX to the USS Estes and this was accomplished. Since I had a weather island resupply flight going to Rongerik the next morning, I requested that a monitor be sent along with the flight to Rongerik. All agreed that this could and should be done and Captain Christenson said he would furnish one. Col. Miller called back and was unable to furnish additional information except that he believed the auto-monitor to be able to record a maximum on the order of one hundred milli-roentgens. After discussing the situation at length, we all agreed that since we were now certain that the information was in the hands of the radiological safety people on the USS Estes, a monitor would go into Rongerik the next day, and since my people were under cover, we had accomplished all we could possibly do that night. It was now about 0200. All departed and I remained up to take care of details concerning the monitor going by MATS to Kwajalein. About 0220, Captain Christenson returned to my room and said that he would go. However, he was PCS at Eniwetok and had no orders. We contacted the MATS Terminal people and found he had to be there before 0300 for departure. To expedite matters I decided to cut orders myself. This was done at

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Captain Christenson's office while he was obtaining his gear for the trip. Concerned with only the short time available to get Captain Christenson off I neglected to contact Col. Starkey, Commander, Test Support Unit. I saw him the next day and apologized for the oversight. However, Captain Christenson did get aboard the aircraft and arrived in plenty of time to go on our resupply flight. I returned to my quarters and went to bed it now being about 0330.

The next day about noon I heard rumors that Rongerik was being evacuated but exact details of this should be prepared by others since I do not have any definite information on it. I did coordinate with Test Services Unit and Task Group 7.4 personnel on and prepare the message sent to Comdr NAVSTA KWAJ requesting evacuation of personnel from Rongerik but understand that evacuation was already in process prior to the message reaching Kwajalein.

The next day Col. Hammond, at my request and upon coordination with Task Group 7.4, arranged for a C-47 flight to Kwajalein and return for Major Langford, Task Group 7.4 Flight Surgeon, and I. At Kwajalein, Major Langford talked to the Navy Flight Surgeon who had been in charge of our Rongerik evacuated personnel and obtained radioactivity information pertaining to them. I talked to the personnel.

Captain Christenson and Lt. McDaniel, from my headquarters, and Naval authorities had all indoctrinated my men on security precautions to be adhered to. In addition I gave orders that no one evacuated from Rongerik would talk to anyone concerning the incident or conditions at Rongerik regardless of rank, without express permission from Mr. Kapral. Mr. Kapral in turn would not give his permission without express orders from Captain Zacheo,

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JTF SEVEN Liaison Officer at Kwajalein. I discussed this at some length with Captain Zacheo and was satisfied that the security of the situation was well in hand.

My men were not alarmed by their situation and were enjoying their rest.

I found that upon arrival of our men at Kwajalein, a decontamination center had been immediately established and all personnel carefully monitored for radioactivity. Decontamination by numerous shower rinses had been effected and new clother issued from the Naval stores. Our people were segregated and placed in quarters with proper radiological safety precaution signs. I believe the Commander of Naval Station at Kwajalein accomplished most effective emergency measures. In behalf of my personnel, I am most appreciative of this action.

I made a copy of Mr. Kapral's diary for the period which is inclosed.

I also asked Lt. McDaniel to prepare a summary of the situation as he saw it during the period. He was at Kwajalein and went on the first flight to Rongerik. A copy of this will be forwarded as soon as possible. Lt. McDaniel is at present on a monitoring and equipment check assignment at Rongerik.

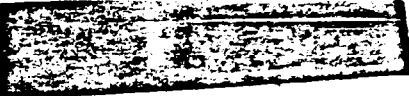
  
FELLE F ROBINSON  
Major, USAF  
Commander, Wea. Rept. Elm, Prov.

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HEADQUARTERS  
WEATHER REPORTING ELEMENT, PROVISIONAL  
APO 187, c/o Postmaster  
San Francisco, California

SUBJECT: Evacuation of Rongerik Personnel

TO: Commander  
Weather Reporting Element, Prov.  
APO 187

1. The following paragraphs contain a brief summary of events that I have knowledge of relative to evacuation of personnel on Rongerik Atoll.

2. I departed Eniwetok on 28 February by military aircraft and arrived at Kwajalein same date.

3. On 1 March I made plans with Commander McDaniel, Air Department Officer, Kwajalein NAS for visits to the weather islands including a visit to Rongerik on 2 March.

4. On 2 March I was awakened by my alarm clock at 0530 hours. When I left my room in the Air Force BOQ to proceed to the latrine I saw Lt Col Disana and Captain Christensen approaching the latrine. Captain Christensen stated that he had come to Kwajalein to accompany me to Rongerik to make a survey of the conditions on the atoll. Up until this time I was not aware of certain events that had occurred at Rongerik during the preceding 24 hours.

5. After a short discussion of the matter at the BOQ we proceeded to the MATS Terminal for breakfast. After eating breakfast we loaded all supplies consigned to Rongerik on the UF-1 Seaplane. Captain Christensen issued a film badge to each individual going on the trip to Rongerik. We got aboard the aircraft and departed at 0800 arriving over Rongerik Atoll approximately 0930. Captain Christensen had the pilot of the aircraft fly at various altitudes to enable him to record readings prior to landing and going ashore on Eniwetak Island. The readings on his instruments indicated that the atoll had experienced events that had not been anticipated. He tried to contact Eniwetok Atoll by aircraft radio but was unable to do same. He then contacted Kwajalein and requested that a message relative to conditions at Rongerik be relayed to Eniwetok. After flying around the atoll for approximately 2 hours, we landed in the lagoon at 1130 hours. Captain Christensen stated he would go ashore on Eniwetak Island to make a general survey of all areas. Upon going ashore he immediately began taking readings with his instrument in the Air Force living area. The survey results indicated events had occurred that made it imperative that all personnel be evacuated as soon as possible.

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WREP, Subj: Evacuation of Rongerik Pers"

6. Captain Christenson had WOJG Kapral select 8 men to depart on the return flight to Kwajalein. We departed from the Rongerik lagoon at 1230 hours and arrived at Kwajalein at 1400 hours.

7. Upon my arrival at Kwajalein, Admiral Clarke, Commander McDaniel, Captain Zackeo and many other people met the aircraft. A general discussion took place relative to evacuation of 20 personnel still on Rongerik. After several minutes had elapsed, I requested of Admiral Clarke that he send an aircraft to Rongerik to airlift the remaining personnel. The pilot of the aircraft stated that he would return and airlift the 20 remaining personnel after he had time to get a brief lunch. Admiral Clarke concurred in this procedure and the aircraft departed at approximately 1500 hours for Rongerik. The 20 personnel arrived at Kwajalein at approximately 1830 hours.

8. All personnel that were stationed on Rongerik and all passengers that went to Rongerik on the first flight had to be processed through the decontamination center at Kwajalein. Upon completion of same, personnel were then taken to the base hospital for a blood count test.

9. After completion of the blood count test, all enlisted personnel were assigned to Building 1150 for quarters pending further medical observation. The officer personnel were assigned quarters in Building 1141 pending further observation.

10. At approximately 1500 hours, 3 March, Major Langford and Major Robinson arrived from Eniwetok. Major Langford proceeded to the base hospital and held a conference with the base surgeon, Commander Hall. After completion of same, Major Langford gave a short briefing to all Rongerik personnel relative to their welfare.

11. T Sgt Neal and I were released from further medical observation so we departed at 1930 hours by aircraft for Eniwetok Atoll. All other personnel were retained at Kwajalein for further medical observation.

  
JOSEPH W McDANIEL  
1st Lt, USAF

  
Extract from WOJG Kapral's Diary

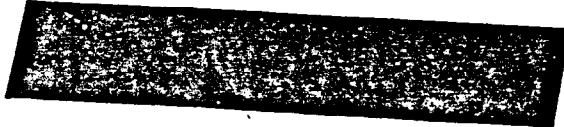
1 Mar 54 - Monday:

Had a restful sleep, ear condition seemingly better. At 0645L, the western sky was brilliantly illuminated, almost requiring shading of the eyes. Illumination lasted for 55-60 seconds before it returned to normal. The top of the mushroom cloud was seen. About 11 minutes later the sound came through, rattling the buildings. The time it took the sound to reach here indicates the flash was about 136 miles away. The radiological "auto monitor" indicated its maximum reading at 1450L and stayed there to midnight end of the day. Hq WREP was notified at 1500L and first answer was received at 2330L, - "Conditions beyond our control, no reply expected before tomorrow". Normal operating until midnight.

2 Mar 54 - Tuesday:

Auto Monitor at max from midnight. Second message received at 0030L. ✓  
"Cease all operations immediately and all personnel remain inside metal buildings until further notice. Maintain rotating shift radio communications with IIR for further instructions." At 0730L monitor still at max personnel had been exposed to .1 rn for 18 hours & Project total is 39 hours. At 1000 received MSG that a PEM was enroute to IIR4 and due in at 1037L. Arrived at 1030L & landed at 1130L after cruising around. Capt Chrestenson, rad-safe off ordered evacuation of all personnel after coming ashore and taking readings in living area. 8 men in alphabetical order were taken off at 1250L. Same A/C returned at 1715L and removed the rest of the detachment (20 men) took off at 1800L. Monitor stayed at maximum until removed from oper at 1700L/2nd Mar.

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SUBJECT: Island Evacuation

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN:

The first I knew about the outer perimeter radiological situation was when I received a TWX at 1043 on D/1 from Navy Aircraft #1902, which inquired if Rongerik Island should be evacuated and requesting immediate answer. I queried various sources and discovered that Captain Chrestensen had gone to Rongerik the previous night to investigate reported fall out in this area.

I immediately notified Lt Col Richard House, JTF 7 of the TWX and asked him what action he would like to take. He said that there was no reason to evacuate as far as he was concerned, because he was of the opinion that they should be reading about 300MR of Gamma shine and this would disappear in a couple of hours. On the basis of this conversation I sent a TWX informing N1902 not to evacuate Rongerik.

Almost immediately I received a message saying that the radiation was 340 MR at 250 ft, and I sent a message back at 1126 D/1 telling them to disregard my message to not evacuate and requested the radiological situation immediately.

At 1200 I received a TWX stating emergency imperative that we furnish PBM to evacuate RAM, and that UF aircraft was evacuating 8 personnel and 20 more still remained to be evacuated. Finally after many attempts to get information, I received a TWX stating that the readings were 3.2R at 1 inch and on this advise I consulted with Colonel Houghton, TG 7.4 as to what acti

he thought was required. It was agreed to evacuate immediately and a  
TWX was sent to COMNAVSTA Kwajalein at 1445 D/1 requesting their assistance  
in the removal of personnel from Rongerik as soon as possible.

JAMES E. CROSBY, JR.  
Lt Colonel, USAF

[REDACTED]  
HEADQUARTERS  
TASK GROUP 7.4 PROVISIONAL  
APO 187, C/O POSTMASTER  
SAN FRANCISCO, CALIFORNIA

SUBJECT: Island Evacuation

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TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN:

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During the week of 15 February to 18 February 1954, I was asked by Lt McDaniel, Deputy Commander for WREP, what provisions should be made for Rad Safe services to the people on the various weather islands. I was unable to give him a positive answer, and told him I would have to make further inquiries. Colonel Houghton suggested I call Colonel House who would be able to give me JTF 7's opinion.

During telephone conversation with Colonel House on about 19 February, he said that nothing need be done about any of the islands except Rongerik, and that in his opinion, adequate dosimetry measures would be taken on Rongerik, if half a dozen or so film badges were exposed during each shot and for the day after the shot. He suggested that these badges be exposed in the living and working areas, and on one man in each representative group of individuals. He also suggested that a T-1B or similar survey instrument be in place on each of the islands as organizational equipment and that individuals in each detachment use the instrument on shot and subsequent days to check for fall out.

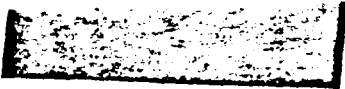
I did not comply with the latter suggestion for three (3) reasons:

1. There are not enough survey instruments in our organization that we could spare four on a loan basis for any but urgent needs, and I did not consider this an urgent need.
2. If instruments had been available, my work-load would not have permitted me to make a trip to each of islands to train individuals in the proper use and maintenance of survey instruments.

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3. I was informed that the New York office (?) already had auto recording instruments in place which would serve the same purpose inasmuch as the weather people had been briefed to notify Mr. <sup>Bresler</sup> Brechin or one of his assistants whenever this particular instrument recorded 100 mr/hr which would be nearly off scale.

In accordance with Colonel House's suggestions regarding film badges, I sent 12 badges to Rongerik on 25 February, with instructions for their storage and use. Mr Kapral has assured me that my instructions were followed, in that 6 badges were exposed during and after the first shot, and the other 6 left in storage for the second shot in case resupply of the island were delayed for any reason.


At about 2330, 1 March, Major Robinson, WREP, received an info copy of a message addressed to CJTF 7 from Rongerik to the effect that the auto monitoring instrument was reading "100 plus" and had gone off scale at 0250Z, and was still off scale. Inquiries made here and at Elmer failed to establish the exact nature of the auto monitoring instrument; thus it could not be established what exactly was meant by "100 plus". After conference between Colonel Houghton, Colonel Hammond, Colonel Watkins, Major Robinson and myself it was decided that we should take advantage of a scheduled MATS flight to Kwajalein and send a monitor - myself - on that flight to meet the regular weather island service flight departing Kwajalein on Tuesday (2 Mar) morning at 0830.

Upon arrival over Rongerik at about 0945, I requested the pilot to fly the length of the island at about 500' altitude. During this pass the average reading of 4 T-1B instruments was 200 mr/hr. Another pass across the island and at the same height gave the same reading. We circled the entire Atoll at 500' altitude and instrument readings were the same over each islet.

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Upon return to Rongerik island. We made another pass at 250' during which instruments recorded activity of 340 mr/hr.

Radio reception was poor at this low altitude so we climbed to 5000' in an attempt to establish contact with Fred tower or the USS Estes, direct. Neither attempt was successful, so further radio messages were relayed through Captain Hughes at Kwajalein. I was primarily concerned in getting an addition airplane - either a PBM or an SA-16 - in order to get the people off the island as quickly as possible. After about 30 minutes of intermittent and frequently garbled radio messages, I requested the pilot to return to Rongerik Island and prepare to evacuate as many as possible in our own aircraft, realizing that if other planes were not available, the Navy UF would have to make two trips. Since it was already approaching noon, this entailed getting the first trip over with as quickly as possible in order to avoid an after dark take off from the lagoon with the last load of evacuees.


While making our descent, the pilot received a message requesting information on the radiological situation. I asked him to reply that the only reading I had was 340 mr/hr at 250' altitude over the island. This message was garbled during transmission and was apparently received at TG 7.4 as "340 MR at 250'" which meant little or nothing.

At 1130 I landed on the island, and, after making a few readings at various places within the living areas, I briefed the men on what I knew of the situation and what was being done for them. It is appropriate here to remark that I consider the group to be an extremely well-disciplined one. There was no panic, nor apparent dismay, and all of the men were willing to do whatever was necessary to secure the island before evacuation and to do it in a much more cheerful than I expected. Commendation is due all of the men with special mention of Mr. Kapral and M/Sgt Pletsch for excellent leadership.

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The following is a list of the various readings I obtained and the locations at which they were taken:

Inside building where the men spent most of their time - 0.6R.  
(This reading is low because the building was hosed down thoroughly early in the morning)

Outside the same building - waist height - 1.8R.

(This reading taken on the PSP platform in front of the building)

Beside the same building - sand surface - 2.4R.


Surface of a bed in a living tent - 1.2R.

All readings taken - and there were not as many as I should have taken fell along the same values.

Mr Kapral had decided to evacuate his people in alphabetical order - making it as impersonal as possible. As soon as all excess baggage had been cleared from the plane to the shore, the first 8 men were loaded aboard the UF and taken to Kwajalein.


As we departed the pilot informed me that he had received a request for further definition of the radiological situation. Unaware of the fact that my original message had been garbled, I concluded that someone was making the request who was unfamiliar with radiological procedures. Therefore, I instructed the pilot to say that I was getting a reading of 3.2R at 1", since I wished to make it as impressive as possible in order to get action as quickly as possible. This was an error on my part.

However, the evacuation proceeded, unfortunately we heard on the way to Kwajalein that additional planes were not available, which meant that the 20 people remaining on Rongerik would not be moved as soon as I had given them to believe. Actually, the first group arrived at Kwajalein at about 1400, and the last group shortly after 1900. I requested that VP29 be alerted for our arrival with people who would need to be processed through their personnel



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decontamination center. We were met by monitors who handled all the ground procedures quite adequately.


The final message I sent was an urgent recommendation that Rongelap be surveyed as soon as possible with the expectation that any habitants would very likely be subjected to the same degree of fall out that had occurred at Rongerik. This recommendation met with approval by CTG 7.4.

*Louis B. Christensen*

LOUIS B. CHRESTENSEN  
Captain, USAF

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B/L fr Hqs WREP, APO 187, c/o rm, San Fran. Calif., Subj: Rongerik  
Incident, dtd 27 Mar 54

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HEADQUARTERS, TEST SERVICES UNIT, PROVISIONAL, APO 187, c/o Postmaster,  
San Francisco, California

30 MAR 1954

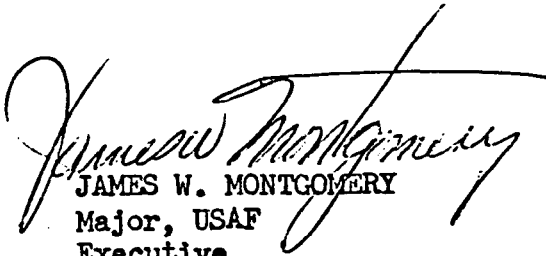
TO: Commander, Task Group 7.4, Provisional, APO 187, c/o Postmaster,  
San Francisco, California

Forwarded for your information.

FOR THE COMMANDER:

3 Incls:

1. (1 cy w/d)
2. (1 cy w/d)
3. (1 cy w/d)

  
JAMES W. MONTGOMERY  
Major, USAF  
Executive





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HEADQUARTERS  
TASK GROUP 7.4, PROVISIONAL  
APO 187, c/o Postmaster  
San Francisco, California

TGDC 370

14 April 1954

MEMORANDUM FOR THE RECORD

SUBJECT: Evacuation of Rongerik After Shot BRAVO, Operation CASTLE

1. Twenty-four (24) airmen and one (1) Warrant Officer of the Weather Reporting Element (Provisional), Task Group 7.4 were assigned to operate a weather station for JTF SEVEN on Rongerik Atoll, Marshall Islands. In addition this detachment operated a recording radiation rate meter for the New York Operations Office, AEC. The purpose of the device was to measure and record any radioactive fall-out which might occur after an atomic detonation on either Eniwetok or Bikini Atolls during Operation CASTLE. This radiac station was one of several situated in the Pacific Ocean area as part of a general fall-out study. The instrument was capable of detecting a maximum activity of 100 mr/hr. Above that figure the instrument was inoperable. Mr M. R. Breslin, JTF SEVEN was the local representative of the New York Operations Office, AEC.

2. Three (3) Army enlisted men assigned to Task Group 7.1 were stationed on Rongerik to operate an Ionosphere measurement station for Project 6.6. These personnel shared messing and housing facilities with the Task Group 7.4 detachment.

3. Shot BRAVO was fired on 1 March 1954 at approximately 0640 local time on CHARLIE Island located in the northwest corner of Bikini Atoll. The ZERO point was approximately 130 nautical miles from Rongerik Atoll.

4. The following is a chronological sequence of messages and decisions leading up to and through the evacuation of the personnel on Rongerik Atoll on 2 March 1954:

a. Message No. 1: From Weather Detachment at Rongerik to JTF SEVEN, 1500, 1 March 1954 - "Attention Mr Breslin, Info Commander, Weather Reporting Element, Provisional. GR 12 MIKE over 100 CHARLIE - Over 100."


Above message received AACS Communications Center, Eniwetok at 1543, 1 March, and delivered to US Army Communications Center, Eniwetok at 1547 (local time) for transmission to JTF SEVEN. Because the "Info Commander WREP GR 12" was in the body of the message, the Weather Element Test Services Unit, TG 7.4, was not informed.



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b. Message No. 2: From Weather Detachment, Rongerik, to JTF SEVEN, 2015, 1 March - "For JTF SEVEN Eniwetok. Pass to Mr Breslin. Auto monitor present reading is 100 plus repeat present reading is 100 plus, pen off chart and has been in this position since 0250Z. Request acknowledgement of receipt from Breslin. Signed Commander."


Above message was received 2040 (local time) by AACS, Eniwetok and delivered to Army Communications Center, Eniwetok for further transmission to JTF SEVEN at 2050. Major Fellie F. Robinson, Weather Reporting Element, Task Group 7.4 was read the message by the AACS at 2049 (local time). The message was discussed with Colonel M. B. Hammond, Commander Test Services Unit, TG 7.4. It was decided to obtain more information before any action should be taken. An attempt was made to locate Mr Breslin of the NYOO, AEC, on Parry Island to determine the meaning of "100 plus". He was not on the island but Colonel Dave Miller TG 7.1 stated that the top range of the instrument was 100 mm/hr. It was then decided to call on other Task Group personnel to assist in evaluating the problem and determine the correct course of action. However, it was considered advisable to send message No. 3 to Rongerik as a precautionary measure - "From Weather Reporting Element, to Rongerik, 0015 2 March 1954: 'Cease all operations immediately and all personnel remain inside metal buildings until further notice. Maintain rotating shift radio communications with one DR for further instructions. Robinson sends.'" "

c. At approximately 2300 Colonel K. H. Houghton, Technical Advisor, TG 7.4, was called by Lt Colonel Watkins and requested that he attend a meeting to consider the radiation conditions at Rongerik. At approximately 2330 a meeting was held at Lt Colonel Hammond's quarters. In attendance were Lt Colonel Hammond, Colonel Houghton, Lt Colonel James Watkins (Commander, Test Aircraft Unit), Major Robinson and Captain Chrestensen, Rad-Safe Officer, Test Support Unit, TG 7.4. Responsibilities for the down cloud area monitoring and the Rad-Safe instrumentation available at Rongerik was discussed. It was determined that Task Group 7.4 should take steps to determine for themselves what the true radiological situation was at Rongerik and not wait for JTF SEVEN notification. It was deemed undesirable to attempt to get a water landing aircraft into Rongerik before daylight (approximately 0700M, 2 March 1954). If a PBM or SA-16 aircraft were sent direct to Rongerik from Eniwetok an advantage of only 1½ hours would be gained over utilizing the regular Kwajalein-Rongerik resupply run that was scheduled for 0800 M on the morning of 2 March. A MATS aircraft was leaving at 0300M on 2 March for Kwajalein from Eniwetok and it was decided to send Captain Chrestenson as a rad-monitor on that aircraft and have him pick up the regular Rongerik run at that station.

d. Captain Chrestensen departed Kwajalein by Navy SA-16 at 0830, 2 March and arrived over Rongerik at 0945. The aircraft did not land immediately but made passes over the island at 500 ft altitude. The


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average reading on the 4E-1B radiac instruments were 200 mr/hr. Another pass at 250 ft altitude was 340 mr/hr. The aircraft climbed to 5000 ft to attempt direct radio communication with the USS Estes or Eniwetok. Transmissions were garbled and intermittent. The following message (message #4), however, was received by the AOC, Eniwetok, at 1043, 2 March from Navy aircraft #1902 "Should Rongerik Island be evacuated at once. Request immediate answer". The message as received did not make much sense but Lt Colonel Crosby, TG 7.4 Operations, queried Lt Colonel Richard House, Rad-Safe Officer, JTF SEVEN. House's information based on shipboard contamination (USS Estes-USS Bairoke) in the target area and fall-out prediction indicated that Rongerik should be in the same contamination level as the ship or approximately 300 mr/hr. The effect should be transient and disappear in a few hours. He counseled no evacuation. Crosby then sent a message to Navy aircraft 1902 informing them not to evacuate Rongerik. This message was sent to Navy aircraft 1902 at 1117M on 2 March 1954 (Message #5).

e. The request from Crosby was received by Navy 1902 and Chrestensen sent back that his only radiological reading was "340 mr/hr at 250 ft altitude." This message was received at TG 7.4 as "340 mr/hr at 250 ft. This was discussed by Crosby and Houghton and Chrestensen was informed at 1126, D/1, to disregard message to not evacuate and again requested the radiological situation in more detail (Message #6).

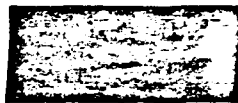
f. Chrestensen finally landed at 1130, 2 March, and made a quick rad survey of the island and work spaces. It was as follows:

Inside buildings	0.6 r/hr
Outside buildings	1.8 r/hr (waist height)
Outside buildings	2.4 r/hr (sand surface)
Surface of one bed in tent	1.2 r/hr
One inch from ground surface	3/2 r/hr

g. Eight (8) men was loaded on the Navy aircraft and started for Kwajalein. As the aircraft departed Chrestensen was informed by the pilot that additional information on the rad situation was requested by TG 7.4. A reading of 3.2 r/hr at one inch was sent (not received). At 1125 Crosby received a TWX stating that the Navy aircraft had taken off eight (8) personnel. (Message #7 & 8).

h. At 1439 a classified message was received from JTF SEVEN LNO at Kwajalein stating "Upon advise of Captain Chrestensen, Adm Clark is returning same aircraft to Rongerik to evacuate remaining personnel - Hughes sends." At 1440 a confidential message was received from JTF SEVEN LNO Kwajalein addressed to JTF SEVEN Eniwetok and TG 7.4 Eniwetok: "Per Crosby's request following submitted. Captain Hughes was requested to assist by Adm Clarke. Following is summary. Navy 1902 UF-1 with Chrestensen





on board requested imperative they have frequencies of USS Estes. They were unable to contact on 126.18. Navy 1902 queried should Rongerik be evacuated at once. Navy 1902 then requested PBM for evacuation and stated they were going in to pick up eight (8) persons. Chrestenson advised that readings at one inch 3.2 r. Navy 1902 landed 1349M, 8 people have been evacuated. Twenty people still to be evacuated. Chrestenson insists remaining personnel must be evacuated immediately. Hughes sends."

i. On the basis of the above TWX Crosby and Houghton ordered immediate evacuation and a TWX was sent to Commander, Naval Air Station, Kwajalein at 1445, D/1, requesting their assistance in the removal of personnel from Rongerik as soon as possible.

j. Chrestensen arrived at Kwajalein with the eight (8) evacuees at about 1400 and the last 20 evacuees arrived about 1900, 2 March. Shortly after arrival, Chrestenson sent via JTF SEVEN LNO, Kwajalein, to CTG 7.4, info to JTF SEVEN, the following message: "Suggest immediate survey of inhabited islands of Rongelap. High possibility exists that immediate steps must be taken to evacuate natives. Signed Chrestenson."

k. Upon their arrival to Kwajalein, the evacuees were decontaminated and placed under care of the Station Medical Officer.

1 Incl:  
Msg list.

KARL H. HOUGHTON  
Colonel, USAF (MC)  
Technical Advisor to the  
Commander

cc: Col Houghton  
cc: Col Crosby

Declassified  
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4



Declassified  
DOD DIR 5200.10





Msg #1 010315Z  
FM LDR4  
TO: LDR-CJTF-7

ATTN MR A BRESLIN INFO COMDR WREP CR12  
MIKE OVER ONE ZERO ZERO EASY-OVER ONE ZERO ZERO CHARLIE-OVER ONE ZERO ZERO  
REC 0343Z

Msg #2 EM LDR4  
FOR CJTF SEVEN ENIKETOK SICLN PASS TO MR BRESLIN X AN TO MONITOR PRESENT  
READING IS ONE ZERO PLUS REPEAT PRESENT READING IS ONE ZERO PLUS CMA PEN OFF  
CHART AND HAS BEEN IN THIS POSITION SINCE 0250 ZEPHA X REQ ACKNOWLEDGEMENT  
OF RECEIPT FROM BRESLING SIGNED COMDR REC 0853Z

Msg #3 011210Z  
FM LDR  
TO LDR4  
CEASE ALL OPR IM ED AND ALL PERS REMAIN INSIDE METAL BLGS UNTIL FURTHER  
NOTICE PD MAINTAIN ROTATING SHIFT RADIO COMM WITH 1 DR FOR FURTHER INSTR  
PD ROBINSON SENDS 1220Z

Msg #4 012243Z  
FM AF1902  
TO: DIRTY FACE  
SHOULD RONGERIK ISLAND BE EVACUATED AT ONCE X REQ IMM ED ANS REC 2248Z

Msg #5 012317Z  
FM AGD20  
TO AF1902  
IN REGARDS TO YOUR MESSAGE NEG EVAC 2317Z

Msg #6 YY 012326Z  
FM AGC20  
TO AF1902  
INFOR LDR4  
  
DISREGARD MY MSG TO NOT EVACUATE X REQ RADIOLOGICAL SITUATION IMMEDIATELY X  
COL CROSBY REC 2332Z

Msg #7 012322Z  
FROM AGC2  
TO AGD20  
  
N 1902 UF1 WITH CHRISTENSEN ABOARD RECOMMENDS EVACUATION ARE YOU IN  
CONTACT WITH N1902 SIGNED HUGHES REC 2330Z

Msg #8 012325Z  
FM AGC2  
TO AGD20  
  
CHRISTENSEN ABOARD UF1 N1902 NOW EVACUATING 8 SIGNED HUGHES REC 2331Z

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