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PETITION FROM MR. GENE CURBOW, NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF ATOMIC VETERANS,  
CONCERNING THE TRUST TERRITORY OF THE PACIFIC ISLANDS

(Circulated in accordance with rule 85, paragraph 1, of  
the rules of procedure of the Trusteeship Council)

National Association of Atomic Veterans  
1109 Franklin Street  
Burlington, Iowa 52601

18 May 1983

The President  
Trusteeship Council  
United Nations  
New York, N.Y. 10017

Reference: Petition to Trusteeship Council

Dear Sir:

I have enclosed the original text of three pages and cover sheet (see annex) as a petition to the United Nations Trusteeship Council. As indicated per our telephone conversation of today, I would be pleased to have this included in the written petitions before the Council.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

(Signed) Gene CURBOW

Annex

PETITION CONCERNING THE TRUST TERRITORY OF THE PACIFIC ISLANDS  
PRESENTED TO THE UNITED NATIONS TRUSTEESHIP COUNCIL

Prepared by:

National Association of Atomic Veterans

Gene Curbow

18 May 1983

I am pleased to appear today as a representative of the National Association of Atomic Veterans and for myself as a veteran who not only saw service in the Marshall Islands, but also as a veteran exposed to high levels of ionizing radiation. It was my pleasure to be part of the history in the making as the greatest nightmare of modern times occurred in 1954. I am speaking of "Bravo" shot. From that nightmare has come a close bond between the Marshallese and the group of Americans exposed during the same detonation of 1 March 1954.

In 1954, during the testing of a thermonuclear device in the Bikini Atoll area, several hundred Marshallese from Rongelap Atoll and Utirik Atoll were exposed to radioactive fallout along with 28 Americans on Rongerik Atoll. This exposure and subsequent fallout of radioactive matter was the beginning of a nightmare which has affected the lives, lands and culture of the Marshallese and has also been the beginning of a nightmare for the American service personnel. Twenty nine years of nightmares can leave one very bitter in his or her beliefs.

On doomsday, 1 March 1954 and earlier, some serious errors were committed by the military and scientific community responsible for making decisions affecting the lives, lands and culture of those we were committed to protect. During this period of development of the thermonuclear devices, the yield of the devices was usually in excess of design. There was nothing in this design, on 1 March 1954, to think any less. Even though officially I have seen many discrepancies in the actual yield, it is thought to have exceeded the design yield by 50 to 75 per cent. This to me is known as "hip pocket" research. This is a factor that should have been taken into consideration by those responsible.

Another gross error that has been widely publicized was the matter of wind direction at the time of detonation. In its press releases of 1954, as a means of explaining to the media the cause of the exposure, the Atomic Energy Commission explained all the errors away as "wind shift". To my knowledge, at least one week prior to the detonation, the surface winds and at levels above were in the easterly direction at Rongerik Atoll. Our equipment and the latest state of the art was capable of reading wind directions up to 80,000 feet and with some degree of success, at 100,000 feet. Our knowledge at that time of charting the upper level streams of air movement known as "Gulf Streams" was very limited and could not be relied upon with any degree of accuracy. It was reported by Life magazine that the apex of the radioactive cloud for "Bravo" shot had reached 32 miles or 169,000 feet. The question that has always been unanswered was why, with the knowledge of risks and conditions, detonate a device and place people under risk?

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Another error was in monitoring the cloud and the movement of radioactivity. With the availability of the aircraft to maintain vigil over the direction of the radioactive cloud, the question has always been why did it take days to remove the Marshallese and American service personnel from a very dangerous and life threatening situation?

After living with the problems and nightmares of exposure for 29 years, the people of the Marshalls and the American service personnel have received neither the medical care nor financial assistance to provide that care which is necessary due to the exposure. This is a shame and disgrace to humanity.

If the world leaders would recognize that radiation is harmful to the health of individuals exposed, the plight of the Marshallese and service personnel exposed from all nations would be better recognized. Instead of looking for cause, the scientific community could then give answers to the problems of radiation. Instead of study we could talk of cure. Instead of denial we could receive help. With help comes trust.

I call upon this body to give this special group of world citizens the help that they need and deserve. Only through the help and assistance received can the word trust, in its broadest sense, prevail.

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