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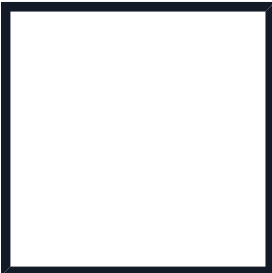
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Cold War fallout for Brookhaven National Lab

August 21, 2009 By THOMAS MAIER thomas.maier@newsday.com



Photo credit: Department of Defense photos | Dr. Robert Conard examines wounds of young islander Hiroshi Kebenli

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No one lives here anymore.

A number of modern homes paid for by American taxpayers stand empty. The freshly painted church welcomes no one. The stark landscape and empty buildings gives this atoll the feeling of a ghost town abandoned by its residents.

Though the government says a portion of Rongelap is safe, the former residents will not return to live there. The northern part of Rongelap - one of a string of tiny islands spread across the vastness of the southern Pacific Ocean - was left so radioactive from the 67 American nuclear bomb tests that ended in the late 1950s that it still remains a forbidden zone.

Looking down from an airplane, Norio Kebenli says he dreams of returning. He and hundreds of other former residents of Rongelap live in exile 400 miles away, on other atolls in the [Marshall Islands](#) archipelago.

galleries

"I dream about Rongelap and the lagoon area and all the people who were there," he said.

More than 50 years after the last nuclear bomb was detonated by the [United States](#), events that transpired in the [Marshall Islands](#) at the height of the Cold War are still being played out.



For many Marshallese, history has not turned a page. They see themselves as nuclear refugees who endured exposure to radiation so that the [United States](#) could test its nuclear bombs. Many residents and officials say they are deeply worried about cancer rates.

In 2007, the [Marshall Islands](#) Nuclear Claims Tribunal - a little-known group established by the [United States](#) and the tiny Pacific nation in 1988 to assess damages surrounding nuclear tests - ruled that residents of Rongelap were owed a \$1-billion damage award because of radioactive fallout that contaminated the island and sickened its residents.

The ruling brought into sharp focus another entity whose history in the Marshall Islands remains largely untold: Brookhaven National Laboratory

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And now, the [Obama](#) administration will have to decide whether to continue a policy left over from the most recent [Bush](#) administration and refuse to pay the \$1 billion to the former residents of Rongelap, who say their homeland was treated like a radiation laboratory. That amount comes on top of the approximately \$500 million that the [United States](#) already has spent in construction and cleanup projects on a number of contaminated islands.

Spread throughout thousands of pages of official documents reviewed by Newsday lies a story of the lab's long history in the Marshall Islands during the Cold War, when the lab's doctors were in charge of medical care for islanders whose lives were forever changed by nuclear testing.

In its \$1-billion ruling, the tribunal determined Rongelap's residents had been ill-served by the doctors, who were under contract for the U.S. government from 1955 until 1998. In assessing damages, the tribunal accepted the testimony of Marshall Islands residents, as well as experts, that the doctors' primary responsibility to address medical concerns had been trumped by the goal of studying the effects of nuclear radiation on the human body.

While not specifically stating who in the U.S. government set that research goal, the documents paint a portrait of the BNL doctors as key players in it. Much of the \$1-billion award dealt with "past and future" loss of lands and restoration projects. But \$34 million was cited specifically as compensation for "emotional distress," involving more than 250 Rongelap residents who lived on the contaminated islands from 1957 until they fled in 1985.

The decision to put Rongelap's people back on their homeland polluted with radioactive toxins remains a central part of the controversy today. The tribunal found that the BNL doctors returned the residents to Rongelap and surrounding islands in June 1957 after a three-year absence even though they knew it was highly contaminated, and they failed to share that knowledge with the islanders. They didn't adequately warn Rongelap's people about eating local foods polluted by atomic fallout. Instead, BNL used their return as a chance to study the flow of radioactive toxins through the body.

As the tribunal wrote in its April 2007 ruling, the islanders "came to feel like guinea pigs, used for experimentation by the U.S." In addition, the tribunal wrote that the islanders' continuing to live on contaminated islands "supported scientific research and military defense concerns."

Supporting documents in the tribunal's decision make it sound as though BNL's 43-year history in the Marshall Islands was little more than human experimentation done under cover of a medical operation: "The people of Rongelap . . . with other Marshallese, served as unwitting subjects in a series of experiments designed to take advantage of the research opportunities accompanying exposure of a distinct human population to radiation." according to a filing by Rongelap officials.

The tribunal's decision specifically quotes a 1975 letter to BNL's main researcher, Dr. Robert Conard, as cancer fears grew on Rongelap. "You have never really cared about us as people - only as a group of guinea pigs for your government's bomb research effort," complained Rongelap's magistrate. "There is no question about your technical competence, but we often wonder about your humanity."

Today, worries about cancer and other health problems from the atomic exposure still linger. In July 2007 testimony before a U.S. House subcommittee, the tribunal's then-chairman, James H. Plasman, said a 2004 study by the U.S. National Cancer Institute showed that radiation throughout the Marshall Islands created a health problem far greater than Brookhaven and other scientists had said at the time could develop.

"The differences in what was known in 1986 and what is known today based simply on the NCI study are staggering," Plasman said. "In 1986, a handful of cancers were acknowledged to result from the testing; today, over 500 radiation-related cancers are estimated to be caused by the testing program. . . . The numbers speak for themselves."

At BNL, the lab's history in the Marshall Islands is one that officials say they can't address because all the main participants are dead and no records remain there. They also say they cannot find tissue samples - including thyroids - removed from Marshall Islands residents in exchange for large cash payments.

What remains of BNL's tenure in the Marshall Islands are the once secret documents reviewed by the tribunal, the published memoir of one of the main doctors, interviews conducted with former BNL scientists, and the accounts of residents and officials of the islands.

Before he died in January 2007 - four months before the tribunal's ruling - Dr. Victor Bond, who had been a member of the BNL medical team, dismissed the islanders' complaints.

"I just don't feel that the term 'guinea pigs' is appropriate anywhere in these discussions," he told Newsday.

Looking back over this history, Chris Conard of East Setauket, the son of BNL's main scientist in the Marshall Islands, said his father, who died in 2001, served his country and upheld his moral obligations as a medical doctor.

"My father, knowing the facts as a research scientist and understanding the conditions at that time, would never have made a decision to jeopardize people's lives in that way," he said. "Everything in life is a calculated risk, everything we do in life."

He said his father made decisions "in order to, in my opinion, better mankind and raise the awareness of the scientific community in this area. That's the only response I have, not knowing everything."

In Washington, D.C., officials at the Energy Department, which supervised the BNL research, said that lab doctors' work met all standards.

"At the time Brookhaven delivered the services for us, they were world-class," said Patricia Worthington, the department's director of health and safety. "They were recognized for their expertise in understanding the health effects from radiation. They were liked by the Marshallese and they were well-respected at that time."

In the Marshall Islands, the legacy of the Cold War is a story of fear and anger over the nuclear tests themselves and what the BNL doctors - whom residents say they trusted and saw as friends - failed to tell them. According to tribunal records, what the doctors withheld for years included the results of urine tests that showed the presence of plutonium in some islanders' bodies.

"I get so mad that we didn't know," said Justina R. Langidrik, the Marshall Islands secretary of health.

One other country - France - has wrestled with the legacy of its Cold War bomb tests in the South Pacific. In late March, France announced it would "be true to its conscience" and pay compensation to residents of French Polynesia who were exposed to nuclear tests carried out between 1960 and 1996.

Here in the Marshall Islands, residents are waiting to see if the [Obama](#) administration and Congress will continue the [Bush](#) policy opposing paying damages, and they had no further word this week.

"First, I saw the blast"

At dawn, on March 1, 1954, in the Marshall Islands, a new world was born.

"First, I saw the blast - the lightning - and then later I heard the sound, like a thunderstorm," recalled Norio Kebenli, now 65, who was then a boy preparing for school on Rongelap. "There was a big noise. I didn't know what to do."

Detonated on the Bikini Atoll, an American hydrogen bomb called "Bravo" burned so brightly that it seemed as though the world had turned upside down, with the sun rising in the west instead of the east.

Moments later, the earth shook, rocking the beaches and rippling the blue lagoon near Kebenli's home. The explosion broke windows and knocked coconuts out of trees.

Ignited at the height of America's rivalry with the Soviet Union, the Bravo blast was the most powerful U.S. nuclear explosion ever - the equivalent of 15 million tons of TNT, a thousand times stronger than the bomb that had destroyed Hiroshima nine years earlier. It carved a crater 6,000 feet in diameter and 240 feet deep and sent a mushroom cloud of vaporized, radioactive debris 114,000 feet into the air.

Fallout drifted across the Pacific for more than 200 miles, blanketing Rongelap's archipelago of atolls 110 miles away. American military officials would later say the fallout was an accident - they thought the wind would blow in another direction that morning. If true, it was an accident with profound human and financial consequences that would last into the 21st century.

The wind brought with it radioactive ash that fell like snow, landing on men, women and children, burning their skin and hair. "It hurt so much," Kebenli said. "I didn't know what it was, but I was scared. I just dove into the water." His skin still bears faint scars from his burns.

The contamination forced the American government to evacuate the islanders. Many experienced vomiting and diarrhea, and their white blood cell counts plummeted - signs of radioactive poisoning. Two U.S. military

doctors - Bond and Eugene Cronkite - advised other U.S. officials right after the blast that the [United States](#) should keep Rongelap's residents away from any more radioactivity from future tests for at least 12 years, if not the rest of their lives, determining they had had enough exposure for a lifetime, documents show.

Nevertheless, three years later, in June 1957, the Rongelap people were returned to their contaminated homeland with the approval of the U.S. government, along with Bond, Cronkite and Conard, who by then had moved to BNL. Documents reviewed by *Newsday* give little scientific reason for why the BNL team changed its mind and agreed to the return of people to an island they knew was contaminated. But the tribunal records show that this single decision would have staggering consequences for the residents. The decision to return the Rongelapese to their island in 1957 is cited numerous times in the \$1-billion damage award.

According to *Newsday's* interviews - and tribunal records and testimony - no one in the U.S. government or the Brookhaven doctors told those who returned that Rongelap's atoll was among the most radioactive places on Earth. Thousands of pages of tribunal documents show that the BNL doctors wore two incompatible hats - as medical doctors trained in the ethical standards of medicine and as nuclear researchers working in a time of fear of nuclear war.

While the Rongelapese longed to go home, documents show Conard's medical team had another interest in allowing their return: The doctors wanted to know how a body reacted to radiation.

"The habitation of these people on the island will afford most valuable ecological radiation data on human beings," Conard wrote in a 1957 confidential internal memo. He added that "various radioisotopes present can be traced from the soil, through the food chain, and into the human beings."

On Rongelap, no one questioned the doctors' motives.

"Everybody liked to go back," Kebenli recalled, as he walked around a deserted Rongelap with a *Newsday* reporter, recalling his family's return there a half-century earlier. "We just didn't know the island was still contaminated."

The Rongelapese lived on their contaminated island from 1957 until 1985, when they arranged with the international environmental group Greenpeace to flee on their ship the *Rainbow Warrior*. The exodus was kept a secret from the BNL doctors who, when they heard about it, were highly critical.

During the Cold War, with fears of nuclear war widespread, there were reasons to study what radiation did to human beings. The political brinkmanship between the [United States](#) and the Soviet Union nearly brought the world to nuclear war. Schoolchildren practiced diving under their desks; many families constructed bomb shelters in their homes.

To some historians, fear of attack at that time drove Americans to conduct tests in Nevada and later, after nuclear bombs became too large for domestic testing, in the Marshall Islands.

"All of the fears during the Cold War were like the period immediately after 9/11 and gave people reason to cut corners and justify the open-air testing of the bombs," said Richard Rhodes, a Pulitzer-winning historian. "They were sorry people were there for the testing, but they justified it with the Soviet threat."

Other experts dismiss this view and argue that the medical care the islanders received - and the humiliation some islanders told the tribunal they endured over the years - had nothing to do with the Cold War.

Dr. Neal Palafox, a University of Hawaii physician in charge of Marshallese medical care for the past 10 years after the Energy Department replaced BNL in 1998, said the lab's doctors needlessly exposed the Rongelapese to radiation.

"I wouldn't have moved them back," Palafox said during Newsday's 2007 visit; his Energy Department contract ended in December. "With the many unknowns, I would have considered patient safety first. The question is, 'Would I move my mother, my family back?' And if you have to think about it, that is a red flag. At the very least, there wasn't enough information to say, 'I'm for certain this is safe.' It was a gamble."

Evacuation and return

On his plane ride home to Rongelap, Kebenli was joined by Lijon Eknilang, another of the "exposed" people, as the Brookhaven medical team called those affected by the Bravo blast. As part of the lab's research study, all residents were given numbers. Eknilang was No. 53, Kebenli No. 76.

Their photographs taken at the time, with their numbers held in front of them, look like police mug shots. Some children whose growth was stunted by radiation were photographed naked and compared with others. "The doctors dehumanized the people to the point that they were mere identification numbers or body parts," Rongelap later said in its tribunal claim.

The two distant cousins are members of the extended Anjain family, tied by blood and marriage to just about everyone else from Rongelap. As a young girl, Eknilang grew up on the Ailinginae Atoll, a sliver of islands about 20 miles from Rongelap that from the air look like butterfly wings.

"It was a beautiful life before," she recalled.

The day of the Bravo blast was her eighth birthday. She awoke to a trembling noise.

"War has started, the war has started!" her grandmother screamed. "We have to find a place to hide ourselves!"

Four hours later, the ash floated onto Rongelap. Eknilang remembered a yellow film covered the lagoon's surface. While Kebenli dove into the water to protect himself, his older brother, Hiroshi, climbed a coconut tree as the fallout flakes scorched his body. Years later, the boys' mother and their two sisters had their thyroids removed by BNL's medical team in exchange for cash payments. Thyroids are particularly susceptible to radiation damage.

"That night, I was sick and hurt all over," recalled Eknilang, who also later had her thyroid removed. "Everyone was sick and in pain. We kept drinking the water even though it had changed color, and we got sick, more and more."

Two days after the blast, the American military evacuated everyone from Rongelap, taking them to a U.S. military base on the island of Kwajalein, more than 150 miles to the south, where Kebenli met Conard for the first time. Their lives would be intertwined for the next four decades.

At an emergency treatment center, Conard joined other military physicians, including Cronkite and Bond, who later formed the Brookhaven medical team. Kebenli stood in line beside his brother, as Conard examined the burns on Hiroshi Kebenli's arms, feet, neck and chest. A government photograph of Conard examining Kebenli that day appeared many years later in National Geographic, an iconic image of the atomic age.

For the next three years, Rongelap's families lived on a small island called Ejit, in huts built from cardboard boxes. In 1957, the U.S. Atomic Energy Commission approved the islanders' return to Rongelap, with the key finding that the Brookhaven medical team had determined that the island was safe to live on, according to tribunal records. In his memoir, Conard put the onus on the islanders themselves, saying they "longed to return to their atoll," but adding that he did not expect any long-term health threat.

A boat carried 250 people back, along with 40 pigs, 60 chickens and five coffins bearing the remains of those who had died during their exile. Before leaving the boat, the Rongelap residents "offered prayers and hymns of thanksgiving to God for their safe return to their native land," Conard later recounted in his memoir, "Fallout," published in 1992 by BNL.

A sign prepared by BNL welcomed the islanders' home: "Greetings Rongelap People. We hope that your return to your atoll is a thing of joy and your hearts are happy."

Cronkite and Bond, who was later named associate director at Brookhaven, cautioned that the full health problems from the fallout might not be apparent for years. For the returning Rongelap people, records show, they advised U.S. officials that "every possible precaution against inhaling radioactive material, or ingesting contaminated food and water, should be taken." Two years earlier, a U.S.-funded study conducted by the University of Washington showed that edible plants on Rongelap were contaminated with radioactive fallout above the tolerance level.

Just nine months after the Rongelap people returned, radioactive fallout in their bodies soared. A March 1958 survey by BNL showed strontium-90 had increased "by a factor of 10" and cesium-137 "by a factor of 100," according to documents later reviewed by the tribunal. In the interview before he died, Bond said research on the Marshallese was justified because they already had been exposed to radiation from the Bravo blast and anything scientists might find would help save American lives in a nuclear war.

"If they really felt that it was hazardous to those people, they would do what-ever they could to prevent their being returned," he said.

A BNL report to the AEC with Conard as the main author and written just after the June 1957 return emphasized the research value of the program.

"The group of irradiated Marshallese people offers a most valuable source of data on human beings who have sustained injury from all the possible modes of exposure - penetrating radiation, beta radiation of the skin, and internal absorption of radioactive materials," the team wrote. "Even though the radioactive contamination of Rongelap Island is considered perfectly safe for human habitation, the levels of activity are higher than those found in other inhabited locations in the world. The habitation of these people on the island will afford most valuable ecological radiation data on human beings."

Today, the Rongelap people see their experience with the BNL doctors as a painful political gamble with their health.

"Returning the people to Rongelap in 1957 was premature, and the decision by the U.S. to do so at that time was not guided by a thoughtful and informed determination that the health of the people would be protected by such a return," wrote Bill Graham, Rongelap's public advocate, as part of the winning \$1-billion argument before the tribunal. "Rather, the decision to return the people was motivated both by the 'need' of American scientists to conduct further study on the effects on human health of the continued exposures resulting from

resettlement of the atolls and by the desire of the U.S. to convince the rest of the world that the health problems caused by the exposures resulting from the Bravo test on March 1, 1954, had been resolved."

Tests offered by Rongelap to the tribunal show that those who returned in 1957 received an estimated annual dose of 2,360 millirems of radiation - more than four times the recommended annual limit at that time. Much of this analysis was based on Brookhaven's own records of urine and blood samples and the memos written by BNL and government officials that had once been secret.

By 1958, just one year after the islanders returned to their homes, BNL tests showed that both the "exposed" and "unexposed" groups - the distinction the doctors had made between Rongelap residents exposed to radiation on the day of the Bravo blast and those who had not been - had radiation in their bodies. According to a BNL document, the "similarity of the results for the exposed and unexposed groups indicate that most of the radioactivity seen is the result, not of the initial contamination, but of more recent ingestion of food containing radionuclides."

After their return, those who ate locally grown foods developed blisters on their tongues and the insides of their mouths. "They had blisters like when you are burned," explained Erza Riklon, who worked with the Brookhaven doctors for 15 years as a medical officer based on Rongelap. "Some people, in their throats, they had difficulty breathing, swelling and itching."

Medical problems emerge

Lekoj Anjain, the teenage son of Rongelap Mayor John Anjain, arrived at BNL's Upton headquarters in 1968 to have his thyroid examined - one of many Marshallese suffering radiation-related health problems who would eventually undergo surgery. Eleven years had passed since approximately the 250 people, including the Anjains, had returned to Rongelap, and the full impact of living on a contaminated place had emerged with the rise of radiation-related thyroid problems. There also were other fallout issues, according to Brookhaven's own reports, including abnormal rates of miscarriages, birth defects and growth retardation in children.

By now, Conard knew personally that the everyday foods on Rongelap were contaminated. In an unusual experiment, Conard brought back to Long Island items such as coconut meat and milk and ate them himself. Tests of his urine and excrement over a 180-day period showed that his intake of radioactive fallout elements had soared. Strontium-90 shot up 20 times higher than normal, and Cesium-137 was "60 times higher than normal," according to documents.

When American surgeons operated on Lekoj's neck, they discovered his thyroid tumor was benign, and the teenager returned to Rongelap. But a few years later, Lekoj became sick again. Conard told the mayor's family that Lekoj had developed acute myelogenous leukemia, which he and other doctors attributed to radiation exposure.

Brookhaven urged Lekoj's parents to let him be treated at the National Institutes of Health in Maryland. There, on Nov. 15, 1972, Lekoj Anjain died at age 19. A photograph taken a few days later shows his father, John, and his wife at a Maryland funeral home. The following year, John Anjain developed a suspicious nodule on his thyroid that was diagnosed as benign.

Newsday's review of the records shows that Brookhaven's program of thyroid removal eventually included as many as 117 people over three decades, as well as the payment of \$25,000 for each thyroid removed - a staggering sum of money in the Marshall Islands.

"It was sort of blood money," said Palafox, the U.S.-funded physician who oversaw the care of the Marshallese. "If it was seen by the patients that - 'I get \$25,000 for the surgery and if I don't get it, I'm going to die' - that's extremely heavy-handed. Certainly, they weren't informed or allowed to participate in that decision in a meaningful way, which is what informed consent is. . . . I don't know any other program like that - 'If you do this, we'll give you money for it.' "

A now-retired Cleveland doctor, Brown Dobyns, who worked with the BNL team from the late '60s to the early '80s, performed 80 partial or total thyroid removals and reported in a medical journal that 23 of these were cancerous - meaning seven out of 10 were not cancerous, raising the question of whether the majority of the removals were medically necessary.

Former Sen. Abacca Anjain-Maddison, John Anjain's niece who represented Rongelap in the national government until recently, says the \$25,000 payment "was definitely to buy people's cooperation for the program."

After their thyroids were removed, many Marshallese were put on a regimen of daily synthetic hormone treatments. Samples of extracted thyroids were kept in a repository at Upton, along with extracted teeth and other bodily tissues. Today, officials at the lab say they cannot find those samples.

Leaving Rongelap for good

In May 1985, all of Rongelap's residents decided they must leave to protect their health and their children's. Nearly three decades after they were returned to their atoll, the Rainbow Warrior came to carry them away.

On the beach, Lemeyo Abon, a 44-year-old schoolteacher, clutched some personal effects. Her husband pulled along a piece of plywood that they would use for shelter when they reached their new home on an island hundreds of miles away.

"We felt that we didn't have a choice," recalled Abon of that day. "It was not safe enough for us to stay."

A few nights before the evacuation, Abon and her neighbors had crowded into Rongelap's council hall. Standing before them was Jeton Anjain, a dentist who also was the Marshall Islands' minister of health. Jeton was the brother of Mayor John Anjain, whose son had died of radiation-related leukemia in Maryland.

"We have to evacuate, we have to move from Rongelap," Jeton Anjain told the crowd, as Abon remembered that night. "We have to leave because the island is still contaminated."

At that time, Jeton was aware of what had happened on nearby Bikini Atoll. More than 100 evacuated Marshallese had returned to the site of the Bravo blast, assured by the BNL doctors and other U.S. health experts that it was safe, only to be pulled off Bikini again in 1978 when health fears rose. He pointed to the footnotes in a November 1982 report by the Energy Department that acknowledged the overall radioactivity in Rongelap was comparable to Bikini's levels.

"We evacuated Rongelap Atoll in 1985 because we believed it to be contaminated and unsafe," Anjain explained to a U.S. House subcommittee in 1989. "The doctors repeatedly told us we were fine, but one by one, over the years, more than 20 members of the Rongelap community were transported to Cleveland, Ohio, for thyroid operations. We feared for the children."

In three trips, the Rainbow Warrior carried Rongelap's people to Mejetto, an island to the south. Eventually, they scattered throughout the Marshall Islands and other parts of the Pacific.

When word reached Long Island that the Rongelap people had fled, BNL's doctors were stunned.

"Conard, I know, was shocked about it, and thought it was a mistake," said Bill Scott, a retired medical team member. Conard, who by the time of the exodus had retired, pinned the responsibility for the flight off Rongelap on the islanders' own ignorance.

"Unfortunately, they were never able to understand very much about radiation and its effects on them," Conard wrote in his memoir. "They were afraid of this unseen, unfelt 'poisonous powder' and its effects, and this became a strong psychological factor. They continued to believe that every ailment and every death was somehow related to radiation exposure."

In 1988, three years after they fled Rongelap, the islanders learned more about their contaminated islands and their health. A German scientist hired by the Marshall Islands government, Bernd Franke, came across the results of BNL urine tests that showed toxic plutonium levels in blood streams.

"I was totally stunned to see Brookhaven's tests were exceeding the limits," recalled Franke. "But they never told the Rongelap people living on the island. They left everybody in the dark and they violated the precepts of good science."

High price of the Cold War


Today, Marshall Islands officials worry about a 2004 U.S. National Cancer Institute estimate that radiation from U.S. nuclear testing will cause an estimated 530 excess cancers in the Marshall Islands. That is a 9 percent increase in the cancer rate above what would have been expected from the islands' population of about 14,000 during that Cold War period.

Along with cancer fears has come a high price for rehabilitation. U.S. officials say more than \$530 million has been spent on various rehab projects and health compensation throughout the Marshall Islands since 1958. U.S. officials say no one is to blame for how life turned out in these islands.

"I'm not aware of anything I could label that either Brookhaven or DOE did that was wrong," said the DOE's Worthington. "But I believe that we are always forward-looking, forward-thinking about how we can better deliver the services to the people we've been charged to serve and we've been privileged to serve."

These words are of little comfort to many Marshall Island residents. On his visit with Newsday to Rongelap, Kebenli stood behind a coconut tree and remembered his brother Hiroshi. He was No. 26 in the BNL study. Their sister Jimako, No. 39, had a stomach tumor removed years after the blast.

After their family came back to Rongelap in 1957, Kebenli said his brother Hiroshi fished in the contaminated waters of Rongelap and eventually became sicker. Hiroshi eventually went to Brookhaven for treatment. He died at age 24.



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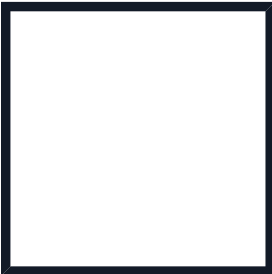
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