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(CULTURAL RADIATION HAZARDS)

ENEWETAK, MAR. 22 (MNS)---ERDA SPOKESMAN ROGER RAY TOLD VISITING NEWSMEN AFTER THE FIRST ENEWETAKESE RETURNED TO JAPTAN ISLAND THAT THE POTENTIAL CULTURAL IMPACT ON THE RETURN IS MORE HAZARDOUS TO THEIR WELL-BEING THAN ANY RADIATION ON THE ISLAND.

RAY EXPLAINED THAT AN IN-DEPTH RADIOLOGICAL SURVEY OF ENEWETAK ATOLL WAS COMPLETED IN OCTOBER 1973 AND CONSTANT MONITORING AND TESTING FOR RADIONUCLIDES IN THE SOIL AND IN VARIOUS FORMS OF LIFE HAS CONTINUED SINCE. A DETERMINATION HAS BEEN MADE ON WHICH ISLANDS HAVE ACCEPTABLE LEVELS OF RADIOACTIVITY IN ORDER TO PICK RELOCATION SITES. THE DATA IS ALL COMPUTERIZED.

HOWEVER, THE SOCIOLOGICAL RESULTS OF THE EARLY RETURN OF THE 55 PEOPLE ARE FAR LESS PREDICTABLE. THE ENEWETAKESE, WHILE LIVING ON UJELANG, ARE IN RELATIVE ISOLATION EXPOSED TO ONLY OCCASIONAL VISITS FROM FIELD TRIP VESSELS, RAY EXPLAINED. DURING THE CLEAN-UP PROCESS, THERE WILL BE AS MANY AS ONE THOUSAND SERVICEMEN, TECHNICIANS AND SUPPORT PERSONNEL INVOLVED. THERE WILL BE JOB OPPORTUNITIES FOR THE ENEWETAK PEOPLE DURING

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THE CLEANUP AND ALTHOUGH AMERICANS WILL BE DISCOURAGED FROM VISITING JAPTAN, THIS WILL MEAN SIGNIFICANT COMMERCIAL-ACTIVITY BETWEEN THE SIX MILE APART ISLANDS OF JAPTAN AND ENEWETAK. THE ISLANDS OF KWAJALEIN AND EBEYE ARE A SIMILAR DISTANCE APART.

RAY EXPLAINED THAT ERDA'S ROLE IN THE CLEANUP IS ONE OF PROVIDING TECHNOLOGICAL ADVISE AND SUPPORT. HE SAID THE THREE MAJOR AREAS OF CONCERN ARE THE REMOVAL OF RADIOACTIVE DEBRIS OTHER THAN SOIL; THE MONITORING AND CHECKING OF THE SOIL AND ANIMAL AND PLANT LIFE; AND THE PLUTONIUM-237 ON RUNIT ISLAND.

THE TASK OF REMOVING THE DEBRIS IS THE LARGEST IN TERMS OF THE MAGNITUDE OF THE JOB. IT IS ESTIMATED THAT THERE ARE 125,000 CUBIC YARDS OF NONRADIOACTIVE DEBRIS AND 7,300 CUBIC YARDS OF RADIOACTIVE SCRAP.

THE PRIMARY CONTRIBUTOR OF THE RADIOACTIVITY IN THE METAL IS COBALT-60 WITH A HALF LIFE OF ABOUT TWENTY YEARS.

DEBRIS IS FOUND ON VIRTUALLY ALL OF THE FORTY ISLANDS BUT THE RADIOACTIVE MATERIAL IS FOUND ON THE NORTHERN ONES. THE NON-RADIOACTIVE METALS WILL BE ACCUMULATED FOR SCRAP REUSE AND THE RADIOACTIVE MATERIAL WILL BE DEEP-SIXED.

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THE PHASE OF THE PROGRAM CONCERNING THE SOIL AND PLANTS IS POTENTIALLY THE MOST HAZARDOUS BECAUSE THE RADIONUCLIDES CAN GET INTO THE FOOD CHAIN. THE TWO MAJOR ELEMENTS INVOLVED ARE STRONTIUM-90 AND CESIUM-137, BOTH EMITTING IONIZING RADIATION IN THE FORM OF GAMMA RAYS AND BOTH HAVING A HALF-

LIFE OF APPROXIMATELY THIRTY YEARS,

STRONTIUM-90 IS THE MOST DANGEROUS BECAUSE IT CHEMICALLY RESEMBLES CALCIUM AND REPLACES IT IN HUMAN BONE MARROW. THE COCONUT CRAB, A MAJOR FOOD OF THE ISLANDS, HAS A GREAT DEAL OF CALCIUM IN ITS SHELL. WHEN IT MOLTS ITS SHELL PERIODICALLY, THE CALCIUM IS STORED IN ITS SYSTEM AND IS RETAINED THERE. IF THERE IS A SHORTAGE OF CALCIUM, STRONTIUM-90 CAN REPLACE IT. RAYS SAYS THAT THIS PHENOMENON IS A "SIGNIFICANT PATHWAY TO MAN" FOR RADIATION.

BREADFRUIT AND PANDANUS ALSO MAY HARBOR STRONTIUM-90 IF GROWN IN CONTAMINATED SOIL OR IF IT DRAW ITS WATER FROM A CONTAMINATED SOURCE. HOWEVER, CONTINUED STUDY OF ISLAND RATS, THE ONLY MAMMALS ON THE ISLANDS, HAS NOT SHOWN ANY SIGNIFICANT PRESENCE ON RADIONUCLIDES IN THEIR SYSTEM NOR ANY GENETIC MUTATIONS.

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THE THIRD PROBLEM, THAT OF RADIOACTIVE PLUTONIUM-237, EXISTS ON ONLY ONE ISLAND, RUNIT. APPARENTLY A NUCLEAR DEVICE CONTAINING PLUTONIUM DID NOT CHAIN REACT BUT WAS MERELY BLOWN TO SMITHEREENS BY THE TRIGGERING DEVICE, SCATTERING PARTICULATED PLUTONIUM DUST OVER THE ENTIRE ISLAND CREATING 79,220 CUBIC YARDS OF CONTAMINATED SOIL.

PLUTONIUM EXISTS ALL OVER THE WORLD, USUALLY IN THE FORM OF OXIDES, BUT ITS CONCENTRATION ON RUNIT IS SIGNIFICANTLY HIGHER THAN ELSEWHERE. PLUTONIUM-237 IS AN ALPHA RAY EMITTER, FOR EXAMPLE, IT EMITS RAYS THAT TRAVEL LESS THAN ONE CENTIMETER AND CANNOT PASS THROUGH EVEN ORDINARY CIGARETTE PAPER. IT CAN, HOWEVER, BE TAKEN INTO ONE'S BODY THROUGH INHALATION OR THROUGH A CUT AS THE PARTICLES ARE KICKED UP AS DUST. PERSONNEL WORKING ON RUNIT WILL NEED TO HAVE FACE MASKS AVAILABLE AND NOT HAVE ANY OPEN LESIONS.

POTENTIAL DAMAGE TO THE HUMAN BODY HAS NOT YET BEEN SIGNIFICANTLY DETERMINED SO RECOMMENDATIONS ARE THAT THE ISLAND OF RUNIT BE MADE A RESTRICTED AREA, AT LEAST FOR THE HALF-LIFE OF PLUTONIUM-237. ITS HALF LIFE? ABOUT 24,000

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YEARS;

(HARRIS ADDRESSES LEGISLATURE)

PONAPE, MAR, 22 (MNS)---PONAPE LEGISLATURE SPEAKER ITOH HARRIS HAS URGED HIS COLLEAGUES TO MAKE DECISIONS ON THE ISSUES CONFRONTING THEM WHICH ARE "VITALLY IMPORTANT" TO THE SUCCESS OF THE DEVELOPMENT OF PONAPE.

"WHAT WE AGREE AND VOTE UPON HERE THESE DAYS OF THE SESSION WILL PREDICT THE FUTURE OF OUR PEOPLE..." SPEAKER HARRIS SAID AT THE OPENING OF THE FOURTH REGULAR SESSION OF THE FOURTH PONAPE LEGISLATURE RECENTLY IN KOLONIA. HE CITED THE DRAFTING OF THE CHARTER OF THE PONAPE DISTRICT

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