



NEWS RELEASE

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August 19, 1998

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

WASHINGTON, D.C. ---- CONGRESSMAN FALEOMAVAEGA QUESTIONS IAEA MORUROA STUDY

CONGRESSMAN ENI F.H. FALEOMAVAEGA TODAY ANNOUNCED THAT HE HAS CONTACTED THE HEAD OF THE INTERNATIONAL ATOMIC ENERGY AGENCY (IAEA) IN VIENNA TO REGISTER HIS CONCERNS REGARDING THE RECENT IAEA AND INTERNATIONAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE STUDY CONDUCTED ON FRANCE'S NUCLEAR TESTING SITES IN THE SOUTH PACIFIC.

IN A LETTER TO DR. MOHAMED ELBARADEI, DIRECTOR GENERAL OF THE INTERNATIONAL ATOMIC ENERGY AGENCY, THE CONGRESSMAN STATED, "AFTER REVIEWING THE MAIN REPORT AND SIX TECHNICAL VOLUMES OF THE REPORT ON THE RADIOLOGICAL SITUATION AT THE ATOLLS OF MURUROA AND FANGATAUFA, I WOULD HOPE THE STUDY'S ULTIMATE CONCLUSION — THAT THE ATOLLS' RESIDUAL RADIATION DOES NOT POSE A HAZARD TO HUMANS AND THE ENVIRONMENT — IS ACCURATE AND WELL-FOUNDED. HOWEVER, I HAVE GRAVE RESERVATIONS AND DOUBTS."

FALEOMAVAEGA NOTED AT THE OUTSET, "FOR DECADES THE FRENCH GOVERNMENT HAS ASSURED THE WORLD THAT THEIR UNDERGROUND NUCLEAR DETONATIONS AT MORUROA WOULD NOT RESULT IN ANY RADIOACTIVE LEAKAGE FOR THOUSANDS OF YEARS. THE IAEA STUDY, HOWEVER, CONFIRMS THAT RADIOACTIVE TRITIUM AND STRONTIUM-90 HAVE BEEN AND ARE PRESENTLY LEAKING FROM TEST CAVITIES INTO THE ATOLL LAGOON. MOREOVER, ADDITIONAL LEAKAGE OF CAESIUM-137 AND PLUTONIUM IS PROJECTED IN THE FUTURE, WITH THE PLUTONIUM CONTAMINATION, IN PARTICULAR, TO CONTINUE FOR CENTURIES."

"DESPITE FRENCH PROMISES OF THE GEOLOGIC INTEGRITY OF THEIR ATOLL TEST SITES," CONTINUED THE CONGRESSMAN, "THE RADIOACTIVE LEAKAGE IS PROOF POSITIVE THAT THE BASALT BASES OF ATOLLS CANNOT CONTAIN, EVEN IN THE SHORT TERM, RADIOACTIVE WASTE LEFT IN THE WAKE OF NUCLEAR TESTS."

"THIS IS PARTICULARLY TROUBLING," STATED FALEOMAVEGA, "SINCE THE IAEA STUDY PROJECTIONS OF LOW LEVELS OF RADIOACTIVE LEAKAGE ARE BASED ON RADIOLOGICAL MODELLING UTILIZING LIMITED DATA AND INCORPORATING SIMPLISTIC ASSUMPTIONS."

THE CONGRESSMAN NOTED, "UNLESS AN IN-DEPTH GEOLOGICAL SURVEY IS DONE ON THE ATOLLS, GIVING AN ACCURATE ASSESSMENT OF THEIR PHYSICAL CONDITION, IT IS DIFFICULT TO PLACE MUCH WEIGHT ON IAEA PREDICTIONS THAT FUTURE RADIOACTIVE LEAKAGE SHALL REMAIN AT SAFE, NON-HAZARDOUS LEVELS. WITH OVER 140 UNDERGROUND NUCLEAR TESTS HAVING RIDDLED THE ATOLLS' STRUCTURES, IT IS CRUCIAL AND IMPERATIVE THAT THEIR ACTUAL PHYSICAL STATE BE ASCERTAINED, WHICH CAN ONLY BE ACCOMPLISHED THROUGH A GEOLOGICAL STUDY."

“THE GREATEST FAILING WITH THE IAEA STUDY,” EXPRESSED FALEOMAVAEGA, “IS THAT IT TOTALLY IGNORED THE HUMAN HEALTH IMPACTS OF FRANCE’S NUCLEAR TESTING ON THE POPULATION MOST IMMEDIATELY EXPOSED, THOSE INDIVIDUALS WHO WORKED AT THE TEST SITES DURING THE PERIOD OF NUCLEAR DETONATIONS. I BELIEVE THE TENS OF THOUSANDS OF FORMER TEST SITE WORKERS, INCLUDING THE FRENCH SOLDIERS WHO WERE STATIONED THERE, DESERVE TO HAVE THEIR MEDICAL RECORDS RELEASED TO THEM FOR REVIEW IN AN INDEPENDENT EPIDEMIOLOGICAL STUDY.”

THE CONGRESSMAN QUERIED, “WHEN INVESTIGATING THE SAFETY OF FRANCE’S NUCLEAR TESTING PROGRAM IN THE PACIFIC, IT IS HARD TO FATHOM WHY THIS CRUCIAL ISSUE OF WORKER HEALTH WAS PURPOSELY EXCLUDED FROM THE SCOPE OF THE IAEA REVIEW. THE IAEA STUDY CONSTITUTED A PERFECT OPPORTUNITY FOR THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY TO CONDUCT AN INDEPENDENT EXAMINATION OF THESE NUCLEAR-RELATED HEALTH ISSUES, YET THE OPPORTUNITY WAS SOMEHOW MISSED. IN MY OPINION, THIS UNFORTUNATE OMISSION IS A GLARING DEFECT IN THE IAEA REPORT THAT TAINTS THE CREDIBILITY OF THE STUDY IN ITS ENTIRETY.”

COMMENTING ON HIS LETTER TO IAEA DIRECTOR GENERAL ELBARADEI, CONGRESSMAN FALEOMAVAEGA CONCLUDED, “I AM HEARTENED THAT OTHERS, INCLUDING FRENCH ENVIRONMENT MINISTER DOMINIQUE VOYNET, HAVE EXPRESSED RESERVATIONS REGARDING THE COMPLETENESS OF THE IAEA MORUROA STUDY AND ARE NOT TOTALLY REASSURED BY THE REPORT. TOO MANY QUESTIONS REMAIN — SUCH AS THE ACTUAL GEOLOGIC CONDITION OF THE ATOLLS, AND THE HEALTH AND WELFARE OF THOUSANDS OF TAHITIANS WORKERS AND FRENCH MILITARY PERSONNEL WHO WERE EXPOSED TO EXTREME RADIATION DURING THE TESTING — TO SIMPLY CLOSE THE BOOK ON FRANCE’S NUCLEAR TESTING LEGACY IN THE SOUTH PACIFIC.”