MEMORIAL AND NUCLEAR VICTIMS DAY: MARSHALL ISLANDS, A QUICK HISTORY
March 1

The Republic of the Marshall Islands is comprised of 29 atolls in the North Pacific Ocean. An atoll is a group of coral islands that form a ring around a shallow lagoon.

After World War II, the United States occupied the Marshall Islands for several
decades. In 1946, the United States began a nuclear testing program in the
Marshall Islands to test post-World War II nuclear weapons.

In 1954, the United States detonated Bravo, the most powerful hydrogen bomb
ever tested by the United States, on Bikini atoll. The fallout radiation from the
test forced the evacuation of Marshallese and U.S. military personnel on four of
the atolls. Many of the people exposed to the radiation began to experience
nausea, vomiting, and itching skin and eyes. Those who were most heavily
exposed suffered skin burns and later hair loss. The U.S. Atomic
Energy Commission issued a statement to the press calling Bravo a "routine atomic
test" and stating that some Americans and Marshallese were "unexpectedly
exposed to some radioactivity. There were no burns. All were reported well."

Throughout the remainder of the 1950s, the U.S. government declared the
islands safe for rehabilitation and returned the islanders to their homes. The U.S.
government gave the islanders money and set up trust funds to compensate for
the damages, and nuclear testing continued. By 1963, the first thyroid tumors
began to appear among those who had been exposed to the Bravo test, and U.S.
doctors noticed a higher than normal incidence of growth retardation among
young islanders. In 1969, the Atomic Energy Commission stated, "There's
virtually no radiation left and we can find no discernible effect on either plant or
animal life."

By the mid-1970s, it became clear that the damage was much more extensive
than originally reported. Throughout the 1980s and 1990s, the U.S. government
set up trust funds for the Marshallese residents and paid the victims millions of
dollars in total.

On Memorial and Nuclear Victims Day, Marshallese people from the four atolls
that were affected by the bomb and fallout gather to pray and commemorate
their atolls and those who were killed during the bomb testing.

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Remembrance Day (Marshall Islands)

From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia

Remembrance Day (Marshall Islands), formally known as Nuclear Victims' Day and Nuclear Survivors' Day, occurs on March 1 and is a national holiday in the Marshall Islands. The day honors the victims and survivors of nuclear testing done in the area in the 1950s.

Castle Bravo was the code name given to the first U.S. test of a dry fuel thermonuclear hydrogen bomb device, detonated on March 1, 1954 at Bikini Atoll, Marshall Islands, as the first test of Operation Castle. Fallout from the detonation poisoned the islanders who had previously inhabited the atoll.

See also

- Operation Crossroads
- Bikini Atoll

External links

- Nuclear Victims and Survivors Remembrance Day
- Remembrance Day

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AMBASSADOR SPEECHES 2012

Nuclear Victims’ Remembrance Day

March 1, 2012 | Ambassador Campbell
I am privileged to speak to you today on this poignant, yet important, occasion. President Loek, Honorable Ministers and Senators, traditional and religious leaders, members of the diplomatic corps, representatives and citizens of Bikini, Enewetak, Rongelap and Utrok, honored guests.

Fifty-eight years ago, the world witnessed for only the second time the detonation of a hydrogen bomb. Code-named Bravo, the explosion was three times the magnitude expected by scientists and 1,000 times as powerful as the atomic bombs dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Scientists and officials also did not anticipate the change in winds at high altitudes that sent part of the radioactive debris over the populated atolls of Rongelap and Utrok. As has often happened in history, humankind suffered because it became entangled in natural forces it did not fully understand nor control.

Thankfully, we learn from our mistakes. Mankind has grown to accept responsibility for errors and has worked to right past wrongs and proceed more cautiously. Indeed, the nuclear age provides a fitting and encouraging outlook on our future. In the 1920s, watches were painted with radioactive radium so they would glow. Workers and companies were oblivious to the health consequences and focused only on radium’s unique luminescence. During the early years of the Cold War, atomic tests were used as proxies for global power and influence, and scientists were only beginning to understand how radiation affected the surrounding environment.

Fifty-eight years later, the world is much wiser. Global nuclear weapons stockpiles continue to decline. Scientists and policy advisors have a much better understanding of radiation and its effects. And efforts at rehabilitating areas affected by nuclear tests are continuing throughout the world.

The people of the Marshall Islands have been uniquely aware of and impacted by this history. All told, 565 Marshallese living on Enewetak, Bikini, Rongelap, and Utrok were relocated due to nuclear testing. I honor their courage and resilience for beginning anew while preserving their love for their home atolls. I honor those from Enewetak and Utrok who left their atolls and have now returned to strengthen their communities on their home atolls. And I am pleased with the progress that has been made in rehabilitating Rongelap.

To date the United States has provided nearly $600 million in compensation and assistance to the Republic of the Marshall Islands to help the affected communities overcome the effects of nuclear testing on your atolls. And while the Compact of Free Association includes a full and final settlement of all nuclear-related claims, the U.S. nonetheless continues to support the country through radiation-related health care services and continued monitoring and environmental assessments on the affected atolls.
The United States sincerely regrets the Castle Bravo accident. But we are proud of our decades of friendship with the Marshall Islands and our efforts to help the people of the four atolls to move forward with their lives and create a better community.

Let us continue to build upon the legacies of the 565 inhabitants living on the four northern atolls at the time of the nuclear testing. Today, those original inhabitants have thousands of descendants living throughout the Marshall Islands, the United States, and the world. Thankfully, much of the world has moved beyond nuclear testing, and those descendents will not be compelled to leave their homes for such purposes.

But Americans and Marshallese still live in a changing world. The effects of climate change are real and will require courageous collaboration and adaptation. Education remains an essential component if we are to succeed in the modern, global economy. Health crises, particularly the growing scourge of diabetes caused by lifestyle, are immediate threats to the country. And improving the quality of life for all requires careful management of limited public resources. I applaud the new government’s efforts to look forward, to help the country meet these challenges. And I again offer to President Loeak and his Cabinet the active cooperation and assistance of the U.S. Embassy and the U.S. Government in achieving these goals. Together, we learn from the past and improve the future.

Thank you. Komm