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United States Senate

COMMITTEE ON
ENERGY AND NATURAL RESOURCES
WASHINGTON, DC 20510-6150

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June 7, 2004

Dr. Andrew Von Eschenbach
Director
National Cancer Institute
31 Center Drive
Bethesda, MD 20892

Dear Dr. Eschenbach:

In anticipation of oversight hearings on the impact of the U.S. nuclear weapons testing program in the Marshall Islands, and because of the National Cancer Institute's (NCI) widely regarded expertise in assessing radiation doses from nuclear testing and understanding the related health risks from such exposures, we request the NCI's expert opinion on the following questions:

1) Please provide an estimate (range) of the expected number of cancers and other radiogenic illnesses (both fatal and nonfatal cases) expected among the people of the Marshall Islands as a result of their exposures to radioactive fallout from U.S. weapons tests in the Marshall Islands. Because this may require an estimate of future illnesses, can you describe the scientific consensus regarding the maximum limit of the latency period for these radiogenic illnesses.

2) Please provide an estimate (range) of the baseline risk for those diseases. That is, an estimate of the number of these illnesses that would be expected to occur naturally among the Marshallese population.

We ask for your reply within 90 days, if possible, and thank you in advance for your assistance. If you have questions regarding this request. Please feel free to contact either Kellie Donnelly at 224-9360, or Allen Stayman at 224-7865 of the Committee staff

Sincerely,

Jeff Bingaman
Ranking Member

Pete V. Domenici
Chairman