



UNITED STATES
DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY
WASHINGTON 25, D. C.

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MEMORANDUM FOR THE PRESIDENT

Subject: Polio in the Trust Territory

This is in reply to the late President's memorandum of November 4 requesting an investigation into the spread of polio in the Trust Territory.

Upon receipt of that memorandum, I directed Assistant Secretary John A. Carver, Jr., who was in the Trust Territory at that time in connection with implementing the President's Survey Mission Report, to make an on the spot investigation of the subject.

Our investigation reveals that it was not a shortage of funds that prevented completion of the immunization program in 1958. The immunization program was confined to the area of the Marshall Islands District, where the illness broke out, and was limited to the period when an epidemic was thought to be an immediate danger. When virological tests failed to confirm the 1958 clinical diagnosis of polio, the health and medical authorities concluded that there had not been a true outbreak of polio and the immunization program lapsed.

The 1963 outbreak occurred at a point hundreds of miles from the area affected in 1958 and has been traced to a U. S. citizen who traveled from an epidemic area in Texas to the U. S. defense base on Kwajalein Island. The first symptoms among the Marshallese people were noted on January 12, 1963. Assistance from a U. S. Naval Preventive Medical team was requested January 16, and the team arrived from Hawaii on January 18. The disease was confirmed to be polio by laboratory tests on January 29 and immunization of the entire Marshall Islands population began on January 31. Through assistance secured from the U. S. Public Health Service, the American Red Cross and the National Foundation, immunization of the entire Trust Territory population began on February 20. This program is 95 percent complete at the present time.

The failure to undertake a large scale immunization program prior to this time was apparently based on the belief that the Micronesian population's limited contact with outsiders spared it from our epidemic diseases.

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