PETITION FROM MR. GENE CURBOW, NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF ATOMIC VETERANS, CONCERNING THE TRUST TERRITORY OF THE PACIFIC ISLANDS

(Circulated in accordance with rule 85, paragraph 1, of the rules of procedure of the Trusteeship Council)

National Association of Atomic Veterans
1109 Franklin Street
Burlington, Iowa 52601

18 May 1983

The President
Trusteeship Council
United Nations
New York, N.Y. 10017

Reference: Petition to Trusteeship Council

Dear Sir:

I have enclosed the original text of three pages and cover sheet (see annex) as a petition to the United Nations Trusteeship Council. As indicated per our telephone conversation of today, I would be pleased to have this included in the written petitions before the Council.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

(Signed) Gene CURBOW
Annex

PETITION CONCERNING THE TRUST TERRITORY OF THE PACIFIC ISLANDS
PRESENTED TO THE UNITED NATIONS TRUSTEESHIP COUNCIL

Prepared by:

National Association of Atomic Veterans
Gene Curbow
18 May 1983

I am pleased to appear today as a representative of the National Association of Atomic Veterans and for myself as a veteran who not only saw service in the Marshall Islands, but also as a veteran exposed to high levels of ionizing radiation. It was my pleasure to be part of the history in the making as the greatest nightmare of modern times occurred in 1954. I am speaking of "Bravo" shot. From that nightmare has come a close bond between the Marshallese and the group of Americans exposed during the same detonation of 1 March 1954.

In 1954, during the testing of a thermonuclear device in the Bikini Atoll area, several hundred Marshallese from Rongelap Atoll and Ulithi Atoll were exposed to radioactive fallout along with 28 Americans on Rongerik Atoll. This exposure and subsequent fallout of radioactive matter was the beginning of a nightmare which has affected the lives, lands and culture of the Marshallese and has also been the beginning of a nightmare for the American service personnel. Twenty nine years of nightmares can leave one very bitter in his or her beliefs.

On Doomsday, 1 March 1954 and earlier, some serious errors were committed by the military and scientific community responsible for making decisions affecting the lives, lands and culture of those we were committed to protect. During this period of development of the thermonuclear devices, the yield of the devices was usually in excess of design. There was nothing in this design, on 1 March 1954, to think any less. Even though officially I have seen many discrepancies in the actual yield, it is thought to have exceeded the design yield by 50 to 75 per cent. This to me is known as "hip pocket" research. This is a factor that should have been taken into consideration by those responsible.

Another gross error that has been widely publicized was the matter of wind direction at the time of detonation. In its press releases of 1954, as a means of explaining to the media the cause of the exposure, the Atomic Energy Commission explained all the errors away as "wind shift". To my knowledge, at least one week prior to the detonation, the surface winds and at levels above were in the easterly direction at Rongerik Atoll. Our equipment and the latest state of the art was capable of reading wind directions up to 80,000 feet and with some degree of success, at 100,000 feet. Our knowledge at that time of charting the upper level streams of air movement known as "Gulf Streams" was very limited and could not be relied upon with any degree of accuracy. It was reported by Life magazine that the apex of the radioactive cloud for "Bravo" shot had reached 32 miles or 169,000 feet. The question that has always been unanswered was why, with the knowledge of risks and conditions, detonate a device and place people under risk?
Another error was in monitoring the cloud and the movement of radioactivity. With the availability of the aircraft to maintain vigil over the direction of the radioactive cloud, the question has always been why did it take days to remove the Marshallese and American service personnel from a very dangerous and life threatening situation?

After living with the problems and nightmares of exposure for 29 years, the people of the Marshalls and the American service personnel have received neither the medical care nor financial assistance to provide that care which is necessary due to the exposure. This is a shame and disgrace to humanity.

If the world leaders would recognize that radiation is harmful to the health of individuals exposed, the plight of the Marshallese and service personnel exposed from all nations would be better recognized. Instead of looking for cause, the scientific community could then give answers to the problems of radiation. Instead of study we could talk of cure. Instead of denial we could receive help. With help comes trust.

I call upon this body to give this special group of world citizens the help that they need and deserve. Only through the help and assistance received can the word trust, in its broadest sense, prevail.
'Atom man' says N-bomb ruined his body

By Jack Dorsey

NORFOLK — C. D. Currow says he is a 'walking atom man' because of heavy exposure to radiation during military nuclear tests 29 years ago. Adding that the government would have compensated him if he had been hit by a bullet in Korea instead of an atom bomb in the Pacific.

But the Virginia Beach resident said he was not lucky enough to be in Korea in the early 50s. Indeed, he was an Air Force staff sergeant.

Currow was operating a weather station at Runkto in the Marshall Islands when the government detonated a 15-megaton nuclear bomb March 1, 1952, on nearby Bikini.

He and 23 other servicemen on the project site were exposed to radiation near the highest exposure level of any military personnel recorded, he said — 94 times greater than the internationally accepted safety standard for maximum radiation exposure.

Twenty-nine years after the test, Currow said he has myriad health problems. "I have had several skin cancers removed, growths on the liver and colon, severe heart problems," he said. "I've had a couple of heart attacks, blocked arteries that are not operable, and I take medication."

On top of how bad you feel, you can't buy hospitalization insurance or life insurance. From that standpoint, I am on my own when it comes to hospital bills.

"Yet Currow, who is the deputy director of the National Association of Atomic Veterans, said he and the veterans' organization represent could not convince the government that their medical disorders were the result of those early nuclear tests.

"We look upon this as being an injury just as much as being shot by a bullet," he said. "Being shot by an atom bomb is just as bad — both of them will kill you."

"So, from that standpoint, we think we have a case. The problem is we are not 29 years later and trying to prove our case to the Veterans Administration and the other government agencies, and they've just about given up after what they think is enough work."

Currow was in Norfolk on Friday at the meeting of the Southeastern Virginia Peace Coalition, which is advocating full compensation for the veterans subjected to radiation and an immediate freeze or the production and deployment of nuclear weapons.

While he stopped short of agreeing to a total freeze on nuclear weapons — "I know we have to have a strong weapons system for defense" — Currow welcomed the group's effort to make the plight of thousands of servicemen like him known.

Currow said the United States was detonating more than 500 nuclear weapons between 1945 and 1971, up to 250,000 military personnel were exposed to radiation. In 1978, when the Defense Nuclear Agency set up a telephone hotline to receive inquiries from affected servicemen, Currow said 61,197 called. Of these, 35 percent reported major health problems, and 2 percent had cancer, he said.

"That alone shows that we are all radiation victims," he said.

To date, he said, the Veterans Administration has awarded service-connected disability to only 18 people who said they had radiation-related disorders out of more than 2,000 who filed. The VA said that, according to records kept by the Persian Gulf Agency, the low doses of radiation received by most of the 100,000 atomic veterans were not sufficient to cause injury in the men or their offspring.

Currow, who speculates a small engineering firm in Virginia, works with low-level radiation veterans organization nearly full time to help the cause of radiation victims.

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Significance

By Irving Wallace

David Wallace and Amy Wallace

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Bomb Blast Coverup

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Zine Penny for Your Thoughts

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FEBRUARY 13, 1983