



Andreas Nef, Brandon Jolbo Bartimues, and Cathy Wakefield. Photos: Hilary Hosia.

Tribunal records preserved

The Marshall Islands Nuclear Claims Tribunal was established in 1988 with the mandate “to render final determination upon all claims past, present and future, of the Government, citizens and nationals of the Marshall Islands which are based on, arise out of, or are in any way related to the Nuclear Testing Program.”

During its more than 20 years of active operation, the Tribunal awarded \$2,384,693,349 in compensation for personal injuries and property damage resulting from the 67 atomic and nuclear weapons that were detonated in the 1940s and 1950s at or near Bikini and Enewetak atolls.

Of that total, only \$77,453,360 could be paid before the funding provided under the settlement agreement was exhausted. The balance of more than \$2.3 billion remains outstanding and the records of the Tribunal constitute the evidence underlying its determinations in making those judgments.

A project to preserve those records commenced in 2012 when the Elsevier Foundation awarded a grant to the Tribunal to organize, stabilize and digitize its records. The funding from this international scientific publishing corporation

Team joins the digital world

With help of Swiss Archivist Andreas Nef, courtesy of the government in Switzerland, hardcopy files dating back to 1989 at the Nuclear Claims Tribunal office in Uliga are being digitized.

Nef visited RMI twice this year to train staff and newly hired personnel, including

third-year College of Marshall Islands student Brandon Jolbo Bartimues.

The Swiss government also provided a scanner and hard drive as part of the aid.

Nef told the Journal that once archiving is complete, a copy will be deposited with the Swiss government as back up should any-

thing happen to the Majuro files.

Since the Tribunal contains sensitive information contained in individual claims, these scanned items won't be available to the general public. Other files, like books and reports collected throughout the years from outside sources, will be available.

provided for purchase of a desktop computer system with flatbed scanner, for the involvement of professional archivists, and for payment of an additional worker to assist in the scanning and digitizing process.

Certified Archivist Dr. Trudy Peterson made two trips to Majuro in 2012 to assess the records and develop a plan for preservation. She also arranged for a digital archivist to spend two months here in 2013 setting up the system and training Tribunal staff. Unfortunately, however, that person became ill during the first month and had to leave before any training had been provided.

During 2012, Peterson also ar-

ranged for the Municipal Archives of Girona Spain, a world-class audio-visual archive, to digitize more than 400 audio tapes and 60 video tapes of Tribunal hearings and other formal procedures. That work was donated by the archive and the city of Girona at no cost to the Tribunal or to the RMI.

Beginning in 2014, Peterson organized a proposal to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Switzerland seeking funding to restart the project. Early in 2015, that proposal was approved and the organization SwissPeace was contracted by that Ministry to administer the grant. In March, Peterson and digital archivist Andreas Nef came to Majuro with a new scanner with automatic

document feeder and two high capacity hard drives for storage of digital files. Training of staff and further organization of the records was carried out at that time and the scanning process finally began in earnest.

Nef returned to Majuro in September to conduct additional training and organization and to deliver two used laptop computers that were donated to the project by SwissPeace and by DocuTeam, the company with which he is affiliated.

In addition, during the summer of 2015, Greenpeace New Zealand and Greenpeace International combined to make a generous cash donation to the project in recogni-

tion of the 30th anniversary of the voyages of the Rainbow Warrior to transport the Rongelap people from their radioactively contaminated atoll to Mejjatto Island in Kwajalein.

Those funds are being used to pay for the services of two additional people to prepare and scan Tribunal files, for a second scanner to use with one of the laptops from Switzerland, and for a printer to use with the other laptop.

The project is scheduled to be completed by the end of 2016 and discussions have begun with the prestigious Swiss Federal Archives on an agreement by which it will provide permanent storage of the Tribunal records.

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Jaluit Senator