



U.S. DEPARTMENT OF
ENERGY

Republic of the Marshall Islands Special Medical Care and Logistics Program Activities, FY 2023

Report to Congress
March 2024

United States Department of Energy
Washington, DC 20585

Message from the Director, Office of Environment, Health, Safety and Security

This report provides information regarding the activities and expenditure of funds of the U.S. Department of Energy Republic of the Marshall Islands Special Medical Care and Logistics Program (Special Medical Care Program) during fiscal year (FY) 2023 as directed by Title 48 United States Code Section 1933(k). The report also provides projected costs for FY 2024.

The Special Medical Care Program provides medical examinations and cancer treatment and logistical support associated with providing those services to the inhabitants of the Rongelap and Utrik Atolls who were exposed to radiation from the 1954 U.S. thermonuclear weapons test, named “Castle Bravo.” This report is being provided to the following Members of Congress:

- **The Honorable Patty Murray**
Chairwoman, Senate Committee on Appropriations
- **The Honorable Susan Collins**
Vice Chairwoman, Senate Committee on Appropriations
- **The Honorable Kay Granger**
Chairwoman, House Committee on Appropriations
- **The Honorable Rosa L. DeLauro**
Ranking Member, House Committee on Appropriations
- **The Honorable Patty Murray**
Interim Chair, Subcommittee on Energy and Water Development
Senate Committee on Appropriations
- **The Honorable John Kennedy**
Ranking Member, Subcommittee on Energy and Water Development
Senate Committee on Appropriations
- **The Honorable Chuck Fleischmann**
Chairman, Subcommittee on Energy and Water Development
House Committee on Appropriations
- **The Honorable Marcy Kaptur**
Ranking Member, Subcommittee on Energy and Water Development
House Committee on Appropriations

If you have any questions or need additional information, please contact Mr. Kevin L. Dressman, Director, Office of Health and Safety, within the Office of Environment, Health, Safety and Security, at (301) 903-5144 or Ms. Meg Roessing, Deputy Director for External Coordination, Office of the Chief Financial Officer, at (202) 586-3128.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'T. Lapointe', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Todd N. Lapointe
Director
Office of Environment, Health, Safety
and Security

Executive Summary

The purpose of this report is to provide information regarding the activities and expenditure of funds during FY 2023 for the U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) Republic of the Marshall Islands (RMI) Special Medical Care and Logistics Program (Special Medical Care Program), as directed by Title 48 United States Code Section 1933(k). Projections for FY 2024 costs are also provided.

The Special Medical Care Program is administered through the DOE Office of Environment, Health, Safety and Security (EHSS) via a cooperative agreement between DOE and International Outreach Services, a Hawaii-based 501(c)(3) non-profit organization. The program provides medical screening examinations and cancer treatment to the inhabitants of the Rongelap and Utrik Atolls who were exposed to radiation from the March 1, 1954, U.S. thermonuclear weapons test, named “Castle Bravo.” There were 253 people on the Rongelap and Utrik Atolls during the Castle Bravo test. At the beginning of FY 2023, 71 individuals were eligible for participation in the Special Medical Care Program. Funding within this program also provided for logistical support associated with medical examination and treatment services including travel, lodging, and per diem expenses for program participants and their escorts.

Special Medical Care Program examination and treatment services were conducted at clinics, hospitals, and other medical facilities in the RMI (located on Majuro and Ebeye Islands), Hawaii, and the Continental United States, including for patients living in the United States. In addition, program physicians traveled to the homes of patients who reside on Woja (Ailinglaplap Atoll), Utrik (Utrik Atoll), Majuro (Majuro Atoll), Mejjatto and Ebeye (Kwajalein Atoll) Islands in the RMI and who were unable to travel. Twenty-seven individuals who were eligible for participation in the Special Medical Care Program at the beginning of FY 2023 were not examined for the following reasons: six eligible individuals refused the examination; seven individuals died (from causes not related to cancer) before receiving their examination; seven individuals could not be contacted because they moved without providing a forwarding address or updated contact number; and seven individuals rescheduled their appointments due to personal reasons.

Annual medical screening examinations were initiated and/or completed for 62 percent of eligible individuals in FY 2023. There were no medical referrals in FY2023. Total expended costs for the Special Medical Care Program were \$890,739 in FY 2023. The costs in FY 2023 were slightly higher than the previous fiscal year due to increased cost of medical services, supplies, and logistical support but remained low overall due to there being no medical referrals. FY 2024 costs are projected to increase to \$1,632,203 as medical costs continue to rise overall and as the likelihood of medical referrals increases due to the aging population.

As of the beginning of FY 2024, there are 64 individuals eligible to participate in the Special Medical Care Program.



REPUBLIC OF THE MARSHALL ISLANDS SPECIAL MEDICAL CARE AND LOGISTICS PROGRAM

Table of Contents

I.	Legislative Language	1
II.	Introduction	1
III.	Medical Services	2
IV.	Logistics Services.....	4
V.	Program Expenditures	5
VI.	Conclusion.....	6

I. Legislative Language

The U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) is directed by Title 48 U.S. Code (U.S.C.) Section 1933(k) to:

[P]rovide the Committees on Appropriations of the House and Senate with a report by December 1 of each fiscal year detailing how funds were spent during the previous fiscal year for the special medical care and logistical support program for Rongelap and Utrik ... referenced in Section 103(h) of Public Law 99-239 [48 U.S.C. 1903(h)]. The report shall also specify the anticipated needs during the current and following fiscal years in order to meet the radiological health care and logistical support program for Rongelap and Utrik....

Title 48 U.S.C. 1903(h)(1) states:

Notwithstanding any other provision of law, upon the request of the Government of the Marshall Islands, the President (either through an appropriate department or agency of the United States or by contract with a United States firm) shall continue to provide special medical care and logistical support thereto for the remaining 174 members of the population of Rongelap and Utrik who were exposed to radiation resulting from the 1954 United States thermonuclear "Bravo" test, pursuant to Public Laws 95–134 and 96–205. Such medical care and its accompanying logistical support shall total \$22,500,000 over the first 11 years of the Compact.

II. Introduction

In fiscal year (FY) 2023, the U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) Republic of the Marshall Islands (RMI) Special Medical Care and Logistics Program (Special Medical Care Program), administered through the DOE Office of Environment, Health, Safety and Security, provided medical screening examinations and cancer treatment to the inhabitants of the Rongelap and Utrik Atolls who were exposed to radiation from the March 1, 1954, U.S. thermonuclear weapons test, named "Castle Bravo." There were 253 people on the Rongelap and Utrik Atolls during the Castle Bravo test. At the beginning of FY 2023, 71 individuals were eligible for participation in the Special Medical Care Program. Funding within this program also provided for logistical support associated with medical examination and treatment services. The Special Medical Care Program is administered by EHSS via a cooperative agreement between DOE and International Outreach Services, a Hawaii-based 501(c)(3) non-profit organization.

The Special Medical Care Program funding was used to provide for:

- 1) Medical services which include:
 - Annual medical screening examinations, including salaries for Special Medical Care Program healthcare professionals and administrative staff; pharmaceuticals; medical

supplies and equipment; laboratory, imaging, and physician services; aircraft and charter vessels for patient transportation inside the RMI; travel, lodging, and per diem expenses for patients and their escorts¹ traveling to clinics in the RMI, Hawaii, or Continental United States (CONUS); medical personnel travel in support of annual screening exams; and medical malpractice insurance; and

- Referral, treatment, and follow-up services, including testing and laboratory services; examinations by applicable specialists; treatment of identified cancer; follow-up care; travel, lodging, and per diem expenses for patients and their escorts; and other travel-related costs; and
- 2) Logistical services and infrastructure necessary to support the operation of the Special Medical Care Program, including lease expenses and utilities for the Majuro Atoll clinic; facility maintenance and repair services; vehicle maintenance and repair services; supplies and equipment; medical and management personnel travel not directly related to medical screening examinations (e.g., program oversight, meetings, etc.); and continuing medical education.

Although the scope of the DOE Special Medical Care Program is confined to cancer related diagnoses and treatment, program physicians provided basic supportive care and referrals to other non-DOE medical care programs including the Section 177 Healthcare Program (also known as the Four Atoll Healthcare Program) and the RMI National Healthcare Program. This report provides a description of the services provided to program participants; numbers and general results of the examinations performed; a general description of treatment provided; an overview of the logistics involved in administering the Special Medical Care Program; and a summary of program expenditures for FY 2023 and projected costs for FY 2024.

III. Medical Services

The Special Medical Care Program provides annual medical screening examinations for potential radiation-related cancers, referrals to specialists for further testing, cancer treatment, and follow-up examinations by specialists.

Special Medical Care Program examination and treatment services were conducted at clinics, hospitals, and other medical facilities in the RMI (located on Majuro and Ebeye Islands), Hawaii, and the CONUS, including for patients living in the United States. In addition, program physicians traveled to the homes of patients who reside on Woja (Ailinglaplap Atoll), Utrik (Utrik Atoll), Majuro (Majuro Atoll), Mejjatto and Ebeye (Kwajalein Atoll) Islands in the RMI and were unable to travel. In FY 2023, medical staff in the Marshall Islands conducted 151 home

¹ A family member or companion who speaks English typically escorts the patients who are referred to medical facilities outside the RMI or to specific examination sites within the RMI to help with language and cultural barriers and provide personal assistance and monitoring of the patient.

patient care visits. Additionally, they made 90 deliveries of personal care supplies and 215 prescription refill deliveries to patients at their homes.

Twenty-seven individuals who were eligible for participation in the Special Medical Care Program at the beginning of FY 2023 were not examined. Of the twenty-seven individuals who did not initiate or complete annual medical screening examinations, six refused the examination, seven individuals died before completion of the exam, seven individuals could not be contacted because they moved and did not provide a forwarding address, and seven individuals rescheduled their appointments due to personal reasons.

Annual Medical Screening Examinations

The annual medical screening examinations generally consist of a physical examination, including a thyroid palpation; gender-specific examinations, such as mammogram; and laboratory tests, which include, but are not limited to, complete blood count, comprehensive metabolic panel, hemoglobin A1c, urinalysis, baseline electrocardiogram, liver cancer screening, chest x-ray/computerized tomography lung cancer screening, thyroid ultrasound, and periodic colonoscopy. In addition, each patient's medical records and personal history are reviewed as part of the annual exam.

Abnormal exam or test results are discussed with the patients and the Special Medical Care Program physician will make referrals for further evaluation and treatment. Referrals for abnormal results that are not indicative of cancer are made to other, non-DOE medical care programs, such as the Section 177 Healthcare Program and the RMI National Healthcare Program. For abnormal results that are potentially indicative of cancer, patients receive additional examinations and treatment by applicable specialists and other physicians involved in the diagnosis and treatment process. In addition, patients are fully engaged in the development and implementation of their treatment plans and provided with access to additional services, including survivorship counseling. Cancer treatment is provided by the Special Medical Care Program until patients are in remission or have reached end of care.

Some imaging services, e.g., thyroid ultrasound, mammogram, and colonoscopy are not always available in the RMI due to equipment maintenance or scarcity of medical specialists, and therefore, these services were not able to be provided to all eligible participants in FY 2023. In those cases, participants were offered partial annual medical screening examinations. In FY 2023, 71 individuals were eligible for Special Medical Care Program annual medical screening examinations, and the following examinations were performed:

- 38 individuals received complete annual medical screening examinations, and
- 6 individuals received partial annual medical screening examinations.
- 27 individuals were not examined for the following reasons:
 - 6 individuals refused the examination.

- 7 individuals died (from causes not related to cancer) before receiving their examination.
- 7 individuals could not be contacted because of no forwarding address or updated contact number.
- 7 individuals rescheduled their appointments due to personal reasons.

Referrals and Treatment Services

No referrals for suspected cancer evaluation were made in FY 2023.

Follow-up Medical Examinations

No follow-up medical examinations for previous referrals were required in FY2023.

Additional Services – Medical Support

DOE has provided the RMI Ministry of Health and Human Services (MOHHS) with medical support in addition to that which is required to attend to program participants at the Majuro clinic. In prior years, the process was informal, but in May 2023 a more formal scheduling agreement was made with MOHHS, and the provided hours were captured on official timesheets. These hours provide MOHHS with the services of a physician and a nurse that can be utilized where the MOHHS has the greatest need, such as clinical support at dispensaries or hospital wards. In the last five months of FY 2023, DOE provided a total of 263 hours of additional clinical support. Clinical hour support prior to May 2023 was not captured.

IV. Logistics Services

The logistics services element of the Special Medical Care Program provides the necessary infrastructure and support needed for the program to operate, including lease expenses and utilities for the Majuro clinic, facility maintenance and repair services, vehicle maintenance and repair services, supplies and equipment, medical and management personnel travel not directly related to medical screening examinations (e.g., program oversight, meetings, etc.), and continuing medical education.

The Special Medical Care Program conducts medical operations in the RMI from two clinical facilities. The Special Medical Care Program clinic in Majuro is located in a commercial center in Uliga Village, within a five-minute drive to the island's hospital. A small office space dedicated to the Special Medical Care Program is leased inside Ebeye Hospital on the Kwajalein Atoll, pursuant to an agreement with MOHHS. The Kwajalein location is used as a staging area, with office space for program staff and storage of necessary supplies and equipment, for logistical support to the Special Medical Care Program.

V. Program Expenditures

The actual Special Medical Care Program costs for FY 2023 and FY 2024 projected costs are summarized in the following table.

Special Medical Care Program Costs

Program Element	FY 2023 Actual Cost	FY 2024 Projected Costs
Annual Medical Screening Examinations: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Salaries for program healthcare professionals and administrative staff, Laboratory, imaging, and physician services, Medical supplies and equipment, Pharmaceuticals, Aircraft and charter vessels for transportation for individuals inside the RMI, Travel, lodging, and per diem expenses for patients and their escorts traveling to clinics in the RMI, Hawaii, and CONUS, Program staff travel, Medical malpractice insurance. 	\$676,007	\$1,158,545
Referral, Treatment and Follow-up Services: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Testing and laboratory services, Examinations by applicable specialists, Treatment of identified cancer, Follow-up care, Travel, lodging, and per diem for patients and their escorts, Other travel-related costs. 	\$0	\$205,751
Logistics Services: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lease/Rent for the Majuro clinic, Utilities for the Majuro clinic, Facility maintenance and repair services, Vehicle maintenance and repair services, Supplies and equipment (office, cleaning, electronic, personal protective equipment, shipping and packing, vehicle fuel, healthy snacks and drinking water for patients), Program staff travel not directly related to medical screening examinations (e.g., program oversight, meetings, etc.), and Continuing medical education for program staff, e.g., conferences and seminars. 	\$214,732	\$267,907
Total	\$890,739	\$1,632,203

In FY 2023, the program's medical referral and treatment costs were lower than the previous year because there were no referral patients. Costs incurred reflect billings for services rendered in FY 2022 but invoiced in FY 2023.

In FY 2022, DOE conducted an analyses of medical treatment costs for the Special Medical Care Program going back several years and existing patient comorbidities to assess trends related to the treatment of cancers among the current patient population. An epidemiologist also evaluated the expected future cancer experience for the DOE program patient population, based upon National Cancer Institute estimates and the program's past cancer experience. The evaluation projected that up to nine new cancer cases of varying types could arise in the period from FY 2023 to FY 2028. DOE expects the costs to increase significantly over the next several years because of increasing treatment complexity due to patient age and other comorbidities, as well as the impact of inflation and other economic factors.

The annual medical screening examination costs for FY 2024 are anticipated to increase because of the effects of an aging participant population and increases in costs for medical expenses. Logistics services costs are projected to increase in FY 2024 due to rising costs of travel and labor. Additionally, it is anticipated that the number of program participants traveling to Hawaii for medical referrals will also rise.

VI. Conclusion

In FY 2023, the DOE Special Medical Care Program continued to provide medical examinations and cancer treatment, and logistical support associated with providing those services, to the inhabitants of the Rongelap and Utrik Atolls who were exposed to radiation from the 1954 U.S. thermonuclear weapons test named "Castle Bravo."

- Annual medical screening examinations were initiated and/or completed for 62 percent of eligible individuals in FY 2023.

Reasons for not initiating or completing annual medical screening examinations in FY 2023 included:

- Refusal of the examination by six eligible individuals.
- Death of seven eligible individuals before completing their exams.
- Not being able to contact seven individuals who moved without providing a forwarding address or updated contact number.
- Seven individuals requested their exams be rescheduled.

Actual costs for the Special Medical Care Program were \$890,739 in FY 2023. Costs were lower in FY 2023 compared to prior years because no patients were identified as having suspected cancers requiring referral for further evaluation. FY 2024 costs are projected to increase to \$1,632,203 due to increased medical costs and anticipated medical referrals as the patient population ages.

As of the beginning of FY 2024, there are 64 remaining individuals eligible to participate in the Special Medical Care Program.