

International Memory of the World Register

Documents on Closure of Semipalatinsk Test Site

(Kazakhstan)

2012-01

1.0 Summary (max 200 words)

40 year long nuclear weapon tests at Semipalatinsk Test Site conducted from 1949 to 1989 resulted in tragedy of people residing at adjacent territories and radioactive contamination of environment.

The results of studying the consequences of nuclear weapon tests at Semipalatinsk Test site are of military and scientific, as well as social and political importance. In the course of nuclear tests at the site not only programmes on creation and testing of various types of nuclear weapons were implemented but also the programmes on studying the destructive power of such weapons and methods of protection from such weapons. Out of 32 nuclear surface bursts performed by the Soviet Union, 30 took place at this site, resulting in formation of local radioactive trails with rather high level of contamination of environment by biohazardous radionuclides.

At this day there is a real danger of consumption of radionuclide contaminated food by population, as radioactive contaminants falling out of the atmosphere to earth surface shall enter the plants and further to animal organisms conditioning the radionuclide migration processes and their redistribution. Anthropogenic and climatic factors add their impact also. Animal and plant products are the end links of biological chain which might lead radioactive substances directly into human organism.

Therefore forty year operation of Semipalatinsk Nuclear Test Site caused significant damage to health of population residing near test site and harmful consequences of nuclear weapon tests, appearing today will continuously show up over extended period of time.

Kazakhstan was the first country taking a step towards universal nuclear disarmament: it closed Semipalatinsk Nuclear Test Site - the fourth nuclear potential of the world by its destructive power.

The documents available are a unique source base for applied researches, and for activities related to restoration of ecology and social and economic development of Kazakhstan.

2.1 Name of nominator (person or organization)

The Archives of the President of the Republic of Kazakhstan (AP), East Kazakhstan Documentation Center of the Newest History" Government Agency under the East Kazakhstan Archives & Documentation Office Government Agency (EKDCNH)

2.2 Relationship to the nominated documentary heritage

Co-owners

2.3 Contact person(s) (to provide information on nomination)

Shepel V. N., Director of the Archives of the President (AP) of the Republic of Kazakhstan

Tchuprov V.M., Deputy Director of the Archives of the President (AP) of the Republic of Kazakhstan

Kasymova G.T., Director, EK DCNH

Polyakova N. A., Senior Archivist, EK DCNH

2.4 Contact details

The Archives of the Republic of Kazakhstan, Almaty city, Dostyk avenue 87 "B"

President of the Republic of Kazakhstan

Telephone: (7 727)264 69 07,262-88-64; Facsimile (7727)264-68-21. 263-13-54; Email arcobotd@mail. ru

East Kazakhstan Documentation

84j Abay St., Semey, East Kazakhstan Province,

Center of the Newest History 071405, the Republic of Kazakhstan

Telephone: (7 7222)522263, 520607; Facsimile: (7 7222)522263; Email zdnivko-semey@rambler.ru

3.0 Identity and description of the documentary heritage

3.1 Name and identification details of the items being nominated

Documents on Closure of Semipalatinsk Test Site (1936-1990)

The Archives of the President of the Republic of Kazakhstan (AP), East Kazakhstan Documentation Center of the Newest History" Government Agency under the E Kazakhstan Archives & Documentation Office Government Agency (**EK DCNH**)

3.2 Catalogue or registration details

The Archives of the President of the Republic of Kazakhstan:

Fond 708 "The Central Committee of the Communist Party of Kazakhstan",

Archival descriptions: 1. D. 33; 2. D. 4; 15. D. 139; 28. D. 129; 136. D. 3081; 139. D. 2190, 25' 2318, 2466; 140. D. 49, 59, 78.

Fond 7 "The President of the Kazakh Soviet Socialist Republic", Description 1, D. 178

Documents (decrees, orders, correspondence, verbatim record, workshop conference materk inquiries, memorandum reports, information, reports, letters from citizens, inquires on operation dispensary No4)

Fund 103, List 73, Document 12, 21, 22, 24, 25, List 64, Document 154, 274, 275, 276

Documents (reports, conclusions, seismic maps, inquires, analyses, reports on health status population in zones adjacent to test site)

Fund 387, List 7, Document 912, 913, 914, 915, 1014.

Documents (decrees, orders, correspondence, verbatim record, workshop conference materis inquiries, memorandum reports, information, reports, letters from citizens)

Fund 409, List 1, Document 1807, 1994, 2021, 2086, 2089

Documents (Resolutions, Orders, Workshop materials, Memorandum Reports, letters from citize: expenditure estimates)

Fund 810, List 1, Document 55, 327, 330

Fund Photographic Documents. List 1. Document 4220, 4226, 4228, 4243, 4247, 4428, 4451, 44! 4497,4519

East Kazakhstan Documentation Center of the Newest History:

Fund 409. Semipalatinsk Province Soviet of People's Deputies and its Executive Committee. List 5 cases. Repository: Nol, Rack 16, No of shelves: 2.

Fund 810. Akim Office of Semipalatinsk Province. List 1. 3 cases. Repository: Nol, Rack 22, Nc shelves: 1.

Fund 387. Public Health Department of Semipalatinsk Province. List 7. 5 cases. Repository: N rack 24, No of shelves: 1.

Fund 103. Semipalatinsk Regional Committee of Kazakhstan Communist Party. List 73. 5 cases. I 64. 4 cases.
Repository: No2, rack 19, No of shelves: 2.

Fund Photographic Documents. List 1.11 photos. Repository No1, rack 3, No of shelves: 2.

3.3 Visual documentation if appropriate (for example, photographs, or a DVD of the documentary heritage)

3.4 History/provenance

The documents of the archival fond 708 named "The Central Committee of the Communist Party of Kazakhstan" during the period between the years 1936-1990 came for the purpose of storage to the archives of the Institute of history of the party under the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Kazakhstan. In connection with the elimination of the party archives the folders were handed over in 1992 to the Central state archives of modern history and in 1994 - to the newly established Archives of the President of the RK.

The documents are represented by the proposals of the 15-th Congress of the Communist Party of Kazakhstan, decisions and statements of the bureau of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Kazakhstan, the deputies of the Supreme Soviet, information of the Council of Ministers of the Kazakh SSR, the party and state organs, addresses of the public associations, the residents of the Urdzhar district of the Semipalatinsk region to close the polygon. The documents are the originals.

The documents of the archival fond 7 named "The President of the Kazakh Soviet Socialist Republic" came for the purpose of state storage from the Administration of the President of the RK in 1997. There in the archival fond is kept the original of the Decree of the President dated August 29, 1991 "On the closure of the Semipalatinsk testing nuclear polygon".

The decisions of the bureau of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Kazakhstan, the letters and information of the party committees, state organs on the collection of signatures under the address of the World peace council, about the pathological changes in the organisms of the people and animals in the districts with the radioactive contamination, about the most frequently occurring oncological illnesses of the population, about the negative reaction of the population to the nuclear tests, the addresses of the deputies of the Supreme Soviet of the Kazakh SSR and also those by O.O.Suleimenov as the leader of the public movement "Nevada-Semipalatinsk", the addresses of the residents of the Urdjar district of the Semipalatinsk region on the stopping of the tests and closure of the polygon, the proposals of the 15-th congress of the Communist Party of Kazakhstan, the statement of the political bureau on the prohibition of nuclear tests, the Decree of the President of the Kazakh SSR on the closure of the Semipalatinsk test polygon.

Documents of various informational content, disclosing the consequences of tests at Semipalatinsk Nuclear Test Site, measures taken to improve environmental situation and rehabilitation activities in the area.

Documents of archival holdings were received by East Kazakhstan Documentation Center of the Newest History Government Agency in various years, in accordance with existing rules and document selection criteria for preservation by the state.

4.0 Legal information

4.1 Owner of the documentary heritage (name and contact details)

The Archives of the Republic of Kazakhstan, Almaty city, Dostyk avenue 87 "B"

President of the Republic of Kazakhstan

Telephone: (7 727)264 69 07,262-88-64; Facsimile (7727)264-68-21. 263-13-54; Email arcobotd@mail. ru

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84j Abay St., Semey, East Kazakhstan Province,

Center of the Newest History 071405, the Republic of Kazakhstan

Telephone: (7 7222)522263, 520607; Facsimile: (7 7222)522263; Email zdnivko-semey@rambler.ru

4.2 Custodian of the documentary heritage (name and contact details if different from the owner)

Name: Administration of President of RK, Address: Republic of Kazakhstan, 010000, Astana, Ak-Orda

The Committee of Archive Management and Documentation of the Republic of Kazakhstan

010000, Astana, 8. Facsimile 7717 2 Orynbor str.. entrance 14
Telephone 7717 2 74 40 53 74 40 53 Email

4.3 Legal status

Provide details of legal and administrative responsibility for the preservation of the documentary heritage

It's the state property. The two archives are responsible for the documents preservation in compliance with the Law of the Republic of Kazakhstan "About culture" (2006), "National Archive Fond and Archives" (1998) and "Instructions on Centralized State Registration of Documents of the National Archive Fond of the Republic of Kazakhstan" (The Committee of Archive Management and Documentation, Ministry of Information and Communication, Republic of Kazakhstan, 1999).

4.4 Accessibility

Describe how the item(s) / collection may be accessed

The documents (on paper) are in open access by the requests of the readers.

The process of microfilming and the transference to another archival depository is proceeding as planned before. There is planned the start of the work for the digitization of this fond.

All access restrictions should be explicitly stated below:

4.5 Copyright status

Describe the copyright status of the item(s) / collection

The documents from the Archives of the President of the Republic of Kazakhstan and the East Kazakhstan Documentation Center of the Newest History Government Agency under the East Kazakhstan Archives & Documentation Office Government Agency were created by the leaders of the party, state organs, public associations and their status is in accordance with the Law of the Republic of Kazakhstan "On the National archival fond and archives" (1998, N 326-13 of the RK) and "Instructions on Centralized State Keeping of Documents of the National Archival Holding of the Republic of Kazakhstan" (by the Committee on Management of Archives and Documentation under the Ministry of Communication, Information and Public Consent of the Republic of Kazakhstan, 2000).

5.0 Assessment against the selection criteria

5.1 Authenticity.

Is the documentary heritage what it appears to be? Have identity and provenance been reliably established?

This is a complex of documents created in the course of operation of various agencies and organizations that in performance of their duties related to restoration of a normal environmental situation in the area and medical inspection of local population.

The complex of documents from different fonds is presented in form of orders, communication between agencies and organizations, inquiries, various information, tables with numerical information and etc.

Not all documents presented are original. There are certified copies that do not lose their scientific and practical value. Therefore the problem of consequences of tests at Semipalatinsk Nuclear Test Site is presented thoroughly and comprehensively, considering its universal importance.

5.2 World significance

Significance of closure of Semipalatinsk Nuclear Test Site is a step towards general nuclear disarmament.

5.3 Comparative criteria:

Does the heritage meet any of the following tests? (It must meet at least one of them.)

1 Time

The time of the existence of the Semipalatinsk polygon was during the period of "the cold war" confrontation between the military-political blocs of the NATO and the countries of the Warsaw treaty. Mostly the documents pertaining to the situation around the polygon were classified as secret. The possibility to acquaint the population of the country with them was born as the result of the lifting of secrecy from them in the Archives of the President of the RK in 2005-2008.

Taking into account that the revival of the atmosphere, soil and water that were subject to the radiation contamination will take a very long period of time, the consequences of the ecological catastrophe will be extremely topical for many decades to come, if not centuries.

2 Place

In August 1947 by the Resolution of the Council of Ministers of SSSR it was decided to create a nuclear test site, under code name "Training Ground No2".

For construction of the test site the territory in 140 km to West from Semipalatinsk was selected, surrounded by small mountains from south, west and north, remote from large settlements, with airport, railroad, and river transport by Irtysh river. Geological conditions conformed the requirements.

Semipalatinsk Nuclear Test Site included the lands of three provinces: Semipalatinsk, Pavlodar and Karaganda. In total 18500 sqm of fertile land, rich with mineral resources was allocated from national economic use of sovkhozes and kolkhozes into use of the test site.

For instance, out 1908 k ha of land in the territory of Abaylinsky District of Semipalatinsk Province 445 k ha was transferred to the military department, and the district was liquidated.

The test site was a large and comprehensive facility that included three main zones (Test field, radiation safety zone and "Sh" field) .

The first nuclear weapon test at Semipalatinsk test site was performed on August 29 1949. The explosion was made at the height of 30 m from surface, its force was 20 kiloton.

The first atomic explosion was not far from nuclear bomb explosions in Hiroshima and Nagasaki by its consequences. Within the first hours after precipitation of local radioactive-fallouts the radiation intensity in the field (Dolon village) constituted 200 R/h. The first 24 hour external gamma irradiation dose for local population was 60 R, for the first week 100, month 130, year-160 R.

Population was not warned about expected nuclear explosion, no actions were taken for evacuation and further decontamination of contaminated territory.

The next two explosions of improved nuclear charge were made in 1951. However, care about population safety was taken only in 1953 (explosion of thermonuclear charge on August 12). Prior to explosion residents of some settlements in Abay district were evacuated to safety zone. Forty persons were left in Karaul village for study of radiation effects on living organism. Within first hours after the explosion local radiation intensity in Karaul village was 250 R/h, in Sarzhal and Kaynar - 150. People were brought back to Karaul at ninth day.

Starting from 1956 population was warned 1 hour before the explosion. In explosions with force over 50 kiloton people were taken from their houses to open field.

On November 22, 1955 the first hydrogen bomb was tested. The explosion was performed at the height of 1500 meters. The cloud containing radioactive products had the height of 18 kilometers. In the result of the explosion large area was contaminated.

Intense tests of improved nuclear weapons at Semipalatinsk test site were conducted during 1956 - 1958. In 1959 - 1960 no explosions were made. In 1961 -- 1962 there resumed the tests of nuclear charges for a new

weapon - intercontinental ballistic missiles. In this period the number of explosions reached 40-50 explosions per year. All of them were performed on surface or air.

After nuclear powers USSR, USA and the Great Britain signed the Treaty on restraining the tests in the atmosphere, space and under water, explosions were moved to underground. Initially they were performed in horizontal tunnels at the depth of 200 m (from 1961), starting from 1965 - in vertical tunnels, at the depth of 500 m and more (force of explosion up to 150 kt).

In January 1965 there was an explosion that resulted in outburst of approx 3.5 million cubic meters of ground. Experiment purpose - creation of artificial water reservoir. Surface of reservoir is 400 m in diameter, depth - approx 100 m. The reservoir is contaminated by radioactive decay products.

In March 1974 during underground nuclear explosion emission to surface took place. From 1987 to 1989 more than 10 cases of emission of so called inactive radioactive gases took place. A significant emission of radioactive gases occurred on February 12, 1989 when the procedure of preparation the hole for explosion was violated.

Altogether operation of the test site is divided into two periods: Open tests (surface and above the ground) and underground. Starting from 1949 to 1963 138 above ground and from 1963 to 1968 28 surface nuclear explosions were carried out - 343 tests. In total 468 tests were carried out at the test site.

3 People

The damage inflicted to health of people in the result of 40 year operation of Semipalatinsk Nuclear Test Site nowadays comes down to excessive cancer morbidity and mortality, impaired immunocompetence, signs of premature ageing, cytogenetic disorders, appearance of a large number of somatic diseases, hematologic disorders, increase of infant mortality, mainly due to infectious diseases and congenital abnormalities.

All territory of former Semipalatinsk province suffered contamination by the products of nuclear blasts, and 1.2 million people got additional irradiation within various dosage range.

In 1956 in Semipalatinsk a custodial medical facility was established - Dispensary No4 under the Ministry of Health of USSR, dedicated to run medical monitoring of population residing in the territory adjacent to the test site and study radiation and sanitary situation.

Researches held by radiological dispensary in Kainar village, Abay district, showed that within the last 25 years 241 persons died from malignant growths, which is 449 case per 100 000. This is 2.5 times higher than taken in average for Kazakhstan. Leucosis killed 14 persons per 100 000, which is 6-7 higher than for Kazakhstan. Within 5 years in Kaynar village 20 cases of congenital deformity were noted.

Dispensary had forms for 19000 persons that were studied for effect of radiation to health of human beings. In the group of tumoral diseases caused by radiation and common to Semipalatinsk area, the main disease was leucosis - featured by excess content of leucocytes in blood - blood cancer.

On February 12, 1989 radioactive gas emission to surface took place after the underground nuclear test. After 2 days in 110 km from test epicenter the radiation background constituted 4000 micro-roentgen per hour. This event pushed formation of the antinuclear movement led by Olzhas Suleimenov, Chairman of the Union of Writers of Kazakhstan, public figure and poet.

In spring 1990 Nevada-Semipalatinsk movement initiated joint actions in USA, Great Britain, Japan, Germany and Kazakhstan, under the motto - Wave of Peace.

Supported by popular will, state policy and parliamentary diplomacy the movement continued struggle for closure of Semipalatinsk Nuclear Test Site. By the Decree of the President of the Republic of Kazakhstan N.A. Nazarbayev No409 dated August 29, 1991 the test site was closed permanently.

4 Subject and theme

The closure of the polygon was a prominent event of the planetary significance and it exerted a considerable influence upon the formation of the international policy and ideology of peaceful coexistence, and

limitation of widespreading of nuclear arms and their testing.

Immensity of effect of nuclear tests at Semipalatinsk Nuclear Test Site on environment, climate, population health has consequences that are difficult to predict.

6.0 Contextual information

6.1 Rarity

Almost all the documents were created by the party, state organs of the former Kazakh SSR, by their content and form they present the preserved specimens of the epoch gone by and due to this fact they are deemed to be rare. In world practice it is the only polygon which was closed on a voluntary basis. Besides not all the archives of the world keep in open access the documents about the nuclear polygons.

6.2 Integrity

Integrity. All the documents are complete, without amendments and damages.