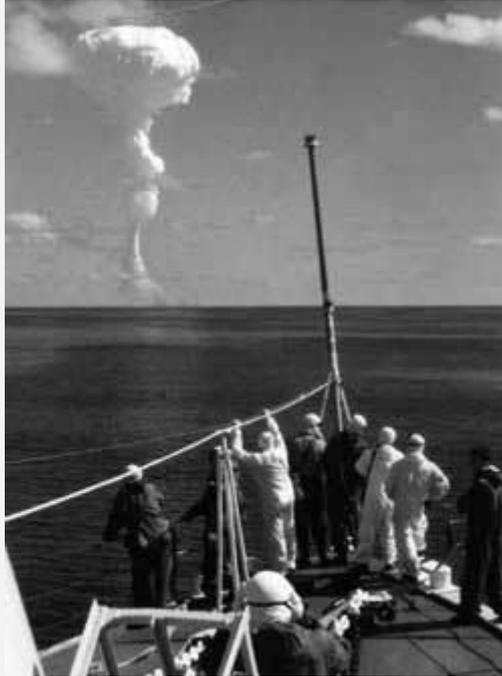


NZ Vets



Operation Grapple, HMNZS Pukaki, 1958

Kiwi sailors' 50-year battle for compensation

The New Zealand Navy provided support for the British nuclear testing program at Christmas and Malden Islands.

551 New Zealand sailors served aboard the frigates HMNZS *Pukaki* and *Rotoiti*, which acted as supply ships and provided weather monitoring and surveillance. They were stationed between 50 and 150 nautical miles from ground zero during the explosions.

Roy Sefton, chair of the New Zealand Nuclear Test Veterans Association, says the crews wore coveralls, masks and gloves during the tests. Clean-up teams wore nylon suits, carried Geiger counters and washed down irradiated sections of the ship. Sefton believes the sailors were exposed to radioactive fallout in rainwater used for drinking and bathing.

The New Zealand nuclear veterans say many of them suffered from chronic bad health and early deaths as a result.

A decades-long campaign for recognition and compensation resulted in some accommodations from the New Zealand government.

Veterans are eligible for war disablement pensions on a case-by-case basis. Their children have access to free counseling, but can only get help with medical costs for specific conditions: spina bifida, cleft palate, leukemia and adrenal cancers.

In 1998 a New Zealand government [Commission of Inquiry](#) said it could find no connection between veterans' exposure to nuclear radiation from Operation Grapple and their children's health problems, although the report said there wasn't enough scientific evidence to rule out a link.

However, the government did award special service medals to a dozen test veterans, and paid \$200,000 to partly fund a genetic research study.

Researchers at Massey University found the nuclear test veterans had genetic transmutations three times higher than normal, a condition most likely caused by radiation exposure.

The study provided a scientific basis for a class action lawsuit against the British government. 700 nuclear test veterans from New Zealand, Fiji and Britain are claiming NZ \$ 36.5 million in damages.

Of the 500 New Zealanders who served at Operation Grapple, less than 150 are still alive.

LINKS

[Servicemen hope for compensation](#)
New Zealand Herald

Fifty years after they were deliberately positioned near a nuclear bomb blast, New Zealand servicemen are hoping key

New Zealand scientific research will help them gain multi-million dollar compensation from the British Government.

Study backs nuclear test veterans' claims

Dominion Post

Nuclear-test veterans say the Government must finally "stop sitting on its hands" now international experts have upheld Massey University research exposing the extent of the genetic damage they suffered.

New Zealand Nuclear Veterans

ABC Catalyst

DNA damage to nuclear test vets prompts call for study of children

Massey University

The Government is considering whether to fund studies into the health of nuclear test veterans' children, after a Massey study confirmed that the veterans had suffered genetic damage as a result of radiation.

An Act of Indefensible Callousness

Massey Extramural Students Society

Between May 1957 and September 1958, 551 Kiwi servicemen participated in 'Operation Grapple', a series of British nuclear tests just off the paradisiacal coasts of Christmas and Malden Islands. The New Zealand sailors have long complained they were exposed to ionizing radiation and suffered genetic damage and lifelong ill health as a result of their proximity to the blasts.

Medallic Recognition for Nuclear Test Veterans

New Zealand Defence Force