

# Descendants of Japanese Fishermen Sue for Bomb Test Fallout Compensation

By Setsuko Shimomoto

**Editor's note: The Castle Bravo thermonuclear bomb test was accidentally the largest nuclear weapon detonation ever made by the United States. The 15-megaton blast was three times the five megatons that was planned, due to errors made by its designers from the Los Alamos National Lab. The bomb's colossal fallout radioactively contaminated thousands of Pacific Island inhabitants, poisoned hundreds of fishermen who were working in the area of the Marshall Islands, and dispersed radioactive particles around the world.**

**Note from Mari Inoue of Manhattan Project for a Nuclear-Free Future:** *Below is a transcript of testimony by Ms. Setsuko Shimomoto, originally from Muroto, a fishing village in Kochi, Japan. In the 1950s, Setsuko's father was a fisherman who was exposed to the radioactive fallout from the U.S. nuclear weapon testing near the Marshall Islands. It is estimated that more than 10,000 Japanese fishermen and 990 fishing boats were affected by the [1954] Castle Bravo series of tests in the Pacific, but their voices and struggles were deliberately suppressed and erased from history. Setsuko is one of the plaintiffs in two court cases in Japan seeking recognition and workers' compensation on behalf of her late father who died from cancer. In February, one of the cases was heard in local court in Tokyo and another hearing is scheduled for May.*

**Setsuko Shimomoto:** "In March 1954, when my father was a fisherman on a tuna fishing boat, he was exposed to radioactive fallout from U.S. hydrogen bomb testing. Deep sea fishing was thriving. Many small, 100-ton fishing boats sailed near the Marshall Islands, where 67 atmospheric nuclear tests were conducted. Some fishermen were told to keep quiet about the radiation; others were not informed. In 1955, the U.S. agreed to pay \$2 million in damages to Japan. Many tuna fishermen were ignored, except for those of the *Daigo Fukuryu Maru* (Lucky Dragon No. 5). The incidents were trivialized as the single incident of the *Daigo Fukuryu Maru*. Accordingly, Japan waived its right to seek damages from the U.S. without the consent of the affected.

"In 2014 after over 30 years of research by Mr. Masatoshi Yamashita, an advisor at Hata Seminar high school program in Muroto, and others, Japan's Ministry of Health released the list of 990 fishing boats that discarded irradiated tuna and documents that recorded the radiation dose of these boats. Researchers of Hiroshima University also tested the teeth and blood of those fishermen and scientifically proved that these fishermen were indeed exposed to radiation. In 2020, we filed two lawsuits, after previous lawsuits had been dismissed; one for workers' compensation, the other against the government for neglecting the fishermen without providing them relief.

"Why did we take action against the government more than 60 years after the incident?"

"The catalyst was meeting the mother of Setsuya Fujii who was exposed to radiation in Nagasaki and the Pacific. Setsuya became ill and killed himself by drowning at the age of 27. Many fishermen have died of illnesses that were undoubtedly caused by radiation exposure. Masayasu Taniwaki was affected while on a training boat and passed away at the age of 20, only seven months after exposure. My father had an operation for stomach cancer at the age of 60 and died of bile duct cancer at 78. Mr. Minami, who was on the same boat as my father, died of liver cancer 13 years after exposure. He was 46.

"The government that failed to recognize the radiation exposure of those fishermen also promotes nuclear energy. Despite the nuclear disaster in Fukushima, the government continues its efforts to restart nuclear power plants. The Ikata Nuclear Power Plant was restarted in December 2021. Japan has also decided to dump radioactive water from Fukushima Dai-ichi into the ocean. Japan is following the lead of the U.S. in downplaying the effect of radiation. Despite being victimized by atomic bombing during the war and having victims of nuclear testing, Japan refuses to sign the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons."

— *Transcript translated by Yukiyo Kawano of Oregon Physicians for Social Responsibility, and edited for space by Kelly Lundeen. See Ms. Shimomoto's full testimony at:*  
[youtube.com/watch?v=TuDoMrYf8s4](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TuDoMrYf8s4)

## US Reactors Operating Dangerously Using Counterfeit Parts

By John La Forge

The lead paragraph from Reuters was originally correct: "Most, if not all, U.S. nuclear power plants contain counterfeit or fraudulent parts, potentially increasing the risk of a safety failure..."

This hair-raising news is just one of the shocking findings in a set of seven reports released February 10 by the U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission's Office of Inspector General (OIG), now headed by Robert J. Feitel.

Among the findings of the first of the seven reports were: "Counterfeit, fraudulent, and suspect items (CFSI) are present in operating plants." • "The extent of CFSI in operating plants is unknown because the NRC does not usually require licensees to track CFSI" ... "if done at all, tracking is voluntary and methods and data quality vary among licensees." • The "termination of [some] rulemaking in 2016 that addressed CFSI oversight concerns" was questionable. • "Department of Energy staff identified more than 100 incidents involving CFSI in [Fiscal Year] 2021 alone, including five incidents involving safety-significant components."

"Counterfeit parts are safety and security concerns that could have serious consequences in critical power plant equipment required to perform a safety function," the OIG report says in its understated bureaucratese. And, "According to the Electric Power Research Institute, counterfeit parts have been found in valves, bearings, circuit breakers, pipe fittings, and structural steel, and can be difficult to spot."

The antiseptic euphemism "serious consequences" resulting from the failure of critical but counterfeit "safety function" parts means, in plain-spoken terms, nuclear reactors going out-of-control, suffering loss-of-coolant meltdowns, and causing massive radioactive releases with acute and long-term damage to environmental and human health.

The finding that "most, if not all" of the country's 94 operating reactors are more dangerous than we thought is potentially so devastating to the environmentally toxic and financially bailed-out nuclear power sector (Reuters said the OIG's reports are "a blow to a U.S. nuclear industry"), that public relations agents and industry allies in the media must



Clean-up workers, self-nicknamed "sponges," worked inside the contaminated Three Mile Island reactor site in Pennsylvania, March 1979.

have run headlong to the phones and demanded retractions. Somehow, they were rewarded almost immediately with a so-called "correction" which misstates and weakens the OIG findings — a "correction" that was placed at the beginning of most follow-up reports.

The retraction misleadingly states that it, "Corrects lead paragraph to say many counterfeit parts are in U.S. nuclear plants instead of most, if not all, plants contain counterfeit parts."

In fact, the report from the OIG — based on confidential testimony from several industry and NRC whistle-blowers — says that "well placed NRC sources" allege that "most, if not all" nuclear reactors operating in the United States today have counterfeit or faulty, substandard parts essential for preventing disasters.

The lead paragraph in *The Energy Daily* improved on the Reuters report by including the word "operating" before "nuclear plant" — a salient point considering their increased potential for radiation disasters compared to the 23 shuttered units.

The "most, if not all" bombshell follows from the fact, as OIG found, that "the Nuclear Regulatory Commission may be underestimating the number of CFSI in plants and their impact because it does not require licensees [reactor operators] to report CFSI except in extraordinary circumstances" like "the failure of equipment that performs a significant safety function."

One such fraudulently manufactured, purchased and installed part identified after it failed was a "service water pump shaft" that was found to be counterfeit after it snapped. The loss of cooling water circulation, either inside a reactor vessel, or in the deep pool of ferociously hot waste fuel rods, has caused some of the industry's worse radiation release disasters.

### Inspector General Savages 'Misleading' NRC Actions, Thanks Comley

The depth of deliberate malfeasance or deception by the Nuclear Regulatory Commission is justifiably savaged in the OIG report. The investigation found that NRC staff had for more than 10 years dismissed, ignored and even misfiled written communications from whistle-blowers so as to hide allegations regarding CFSI. "This investigation revealed that the alleged communicated CFSI concerns to the agency staff via letters, e-mails, phone calls, and discussions at public meetings over 10 years. Most of the alleged's concerns involved Seabrook Station."

"[W]e found that the NRC did not investigate or pursue any substantive actions regarding an alleged's concerns about the presence of CFSI, nor did the NRC process any of the information provided by the alleged over the last 10 years through its Allegation Review Boards."

Indeed, the NRC's Office Allegation Coordinator was found to have classified the alleged's charges as "non-allegations," and then kept secret the details of how such a designation is applied. The OIG politely condemned the agency's action, writing, "Such missing information regarding the NRC's approach to reviewing allegations could be construed as misleading to the public."

"The alleged" is a reference to Mr. Stephen J. Comley, Jr., of the national whistle-blower protection organization We the People, in Rowley, Massachusetts. In a February 10 cover letter to Comley

*See Counterfeit Parts, page 10*