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UNITED STATES  
DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY  
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20240

Dear Mr. Norwood:

We anticipate that it will soon be possible to make an announcement that the former people of Bikini will be returned to their home atoll. I know from your past correspondence to the Department and from the discussions in which you have participated that such news will be welcomed by your staff and the people of the territory.

The Atomic Energy Commission has concluded that the atoll, from the standpoint of radiological hazard, is safe for human habitation. The Defense Department has also advised me that security requirements will permit the return of the Bikini people.

With respect to Eniwetok, however, where permanent security facilities exist, such a return is not possible. Eniwetok is an integral part of the Pacific Missile Testing Range. The high degree of test activity there and the number and extent of missile impacts create hazardous conditions which preclude the return of the former Eniwetok people to the atoll.

I should appreciate your conveying to the former Eniwetok people the information that the return of the Bikini people does not mean that they, too, can be returned in the foreseeable future, although the question will be given continuing review. This does mean, however, that the improvement programs which you have inaugurated on Ujelang should be continued and pushed so as to assist the former Eniwetok people to achieve a decent livelihood.

Sincerely yours,

Secretary of the Interior

Hon. William R. Norwood  
High Commissioner  
Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands  
Saipan, Mariana Islands 96950