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

**Memorandum**

**To: The President**

**From: Secretary of the Interior**

**Subject: Bikini - Eniwetok**

Attached at Tab A is an unclassified memorandum on the return of the people of Bikini to their home atoll together with a proposed public announcement and draft letters to the Secretary of Defense, the Chairman of the Atomic Energy Commission and the Bureau of the Budget, as well as to me, concerning resettlement of the Bikinians.

In anticipation of a desire on the part of former Bikini residents to return to their atoll, I asked the Atomic Energy Commission in December 1966 to conduct a radiation survey to determine whether the islands were safe for habitation. I also asked the Defense Department to determine whether there was any further military requirement for Bikini. As these actions were taking place, considerable news interest began to build on the future of Bikini. Much interest was generated by a petition sent to the UN Trusteeship Council by a Peace Corps volunteer on Kili where most of the former Bikini people live. This was followed by articles on Bikini appearing in Time and Newsweek magazines. Interest in the question has also remained high in the Trust Territory.

Meanwhile, the Atomic Energy Commission and the Defense Department concluded that Bikini could be returned to the natives and we are now working on plans to effect their return. It is probable that an announcement of the Government's decision to return Bikini to its native inhabitants will spur the former Eniwetok natives now residing on Ujaeang to press for their return to Eniwetok. The representatives of the former inhabitants of Eniwetok have already sent a petition to the Trusteeship Council. The petition, among other things, complains about conditions on their present atoll and asks that a definite date be set for their return to Eniwetok.

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However, the two situations are dissimilar. While Bikini has been uninhabitable, Eniwetok has become an intercontinental ballistic missile re-entry vehicle impact and scoring area and the western terminus of the Pacific missile testing range. There are Defense installations on Eniwetok, and there is continuing hazard from missile impacts. These testing requirements with their inherent hazards will not accommodate the return of the former Eniwetok natives. Tab B is a fact sheet outlining current activities on Eniwetok.

We have not included reference to this situation in our proposed Bikini announcement lest it offset the positive features of the Bikini return. However, if questions on Eniwetok are asked, the brief answer at Tab C is recommended.

We have also cleared with the Departments of Defense and State a letter to the High Commissioner which he can pass to the former Eniwetok people advising them that security requirements with respect to Eniwetok are such that their return is not possible at this time.

Secretary of the Interior

Attachments

cc: Secy File  
LOF  
Charles Johnson-SEC ✓  
Joseph Pouchard-AEC  
Harrison Holland-Defense  
Don McHenry-State  
HCom Horwood

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