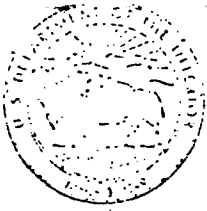


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UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY  
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20240

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MAR 28 1968

Dear Mr. Secretary:

As you will recall, in the years immediately following the end of World War II the United States used the Eniwetok and Bikini Atolls in the Marshall Islands for nuclear testing purposes. The Marshalls are a part of the Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands. The people formerly living on Eniwetok were moved to the nearby atoll of Ujelang and the Bikini people were ultimately moved to the island of Kili. Eniwetok was used as the base for conducting tests in the area and, we understand, is in active use by the Defense establishment at the present time. Bikini has not been used as a test site since the mid-1950s.

The people of Bikini were resettled on the island of Kili, which is not an atoll with an associated lagoon, but is a small island with a fringing reef. Access to the island is extremely difficult at best and is almost impossible at some times of the year when the seas are so heavy as to prevent small boats from moving over the reef to or from the island. The island is in a fairly humid part of the Marshalls and has a higher per-acre agricultural potential than does Bikini. However, the land area of Kili is approximately one-third of a square mile, whereas the land area of Bikini Atoll is in excess of two square miles. In recognition of the substantially more limited land area on Kili, as well as the people's dependence upon a lagoon, the Bikini people were granted certain use rights in the nearby Jaluit Atoll as partial compensation. Their ability to use the Jaluit resources is, of course, limited by the frequent difficulty of getting to and from Kili.

On November 22, 1956, the people of Kili concluded an agreement with the Government of the Trust Territory, acting on behalf of the United States. Under the terms of this agreement, the Trust Territory granted to the former Bikini people use rights in the lands and waters at Kili and Jaluit, as I have described them, until such time as it might be possible for them to return to Bikini, providing they then wish to return. In addition, the former Bikini people were paid \$325,000, of which \$25,000 was paid directly and the remainder invested, the interest being periodically paid to them. The 1956 agreement also provided that:

"The Government of the Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands and/or the Government of the United States of America shall possess the full use rights to Bikini Atoll until such time as it determines it will no longer be necessary to occupy and use the said atoll."

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BRANCH OF SECURITY, DOD  
SIGNED: [Signature]

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Despite efforts over several years to assure the Kili people that any return to Bikini would be far in the future, they have continued to entertain a desire to return. In 1966 they approached the High Commissioner concerning the possibility of going back. Toward that end, the High Commissioner and this Department requested the Atomic Energy Commission to make a detailed study of the remaining levels of radioactivity in the atoll in view of an indication that the levels were no longer dangerous. This study was conducted in April 1967 and the AEC expects soon to be able to complete its analysis of the data and to advise us whether or not the atoll is in fact safe for human habitation and the conduct of normal Marshallese livelihood.

Against the probability that the Atomic Energy Commission will conclude within the next few weeks that the atoll is in fact safe, we should like respectfully to request that you determine whether there still remains any national security need for Bikini Atoll. We recognize that a major land clearing and resettlement program will be required before a return by the Kili people to Bikini is actually possible, and the High Commissioner is drawing up the details of such a proposal to permit all of us to plan more thoroughly the next steps which need to be taken. However, it will be necessary to know as soon as possible after the health determination is made whether or not, from the Defense standpoint, the people can be returned to Bikini.

May I suggest that there are certain "political" criteria which we believe should be weighed in reaching a conclusion with respect to Bikini. One is the generally favorable attitude which the Micronesians now have toward the United States, an attitude which we believe should be encouraged and would be encouraged by the return of the Bikini people. Another is the possible need, some time in the future, for additional military land acquisition in the Trust Territory. The land-poor Micronesian is likely to have a more favorable reaction toward such additional acquisition if a demonstration is clearly made that its lands, such as Bikini, which are no longer needed, are in fact promptly returned. Thirdly, we would list the overall credit which would accrue to the United States if these people, once displaced for nuclear testing by the United States, could be promptly restored to their historic and traditional home as soon as it becomes feasible to do so.

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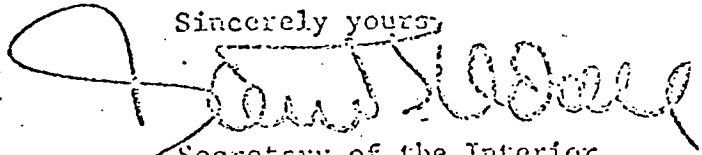
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In the total scope of world problems, the return of a small group of people to their homeland may not loom large. However, the issue has assumed symbolic proportions in our relationship with Micronesia and the Western Pacific. I hope that we may enlist your personal interest and support for a favorable determination at the earliest time that the situation will permit. Assistant Secretary Harry R. Anderson and the Director of our Office of Territories are prepared to discuss the matter in greater detail with such officials of your Department as you may designate.

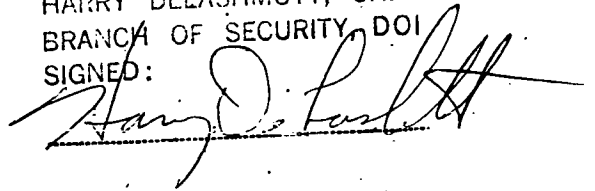
Sincerely yours,



Secretary of the Interior

Hon. Clark M. Clifford  
Secretary of Defense  
The Pentagon  
Washington, D.C. 20301

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