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

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MAY 30 1968

Dear Paul:

Thank you very much for your letter of May 3 stating that the Department of Defense will interpose no objections to the return of the former Bikini people if studies currently underway indicate there are acceptable alternatives to the retention of Bikini Atoll for military purposes.

In reviewing future military requirements, I hope that your study group will give a high priority to the completion of the Pacific Islands phase in order that the earliest possible decision can be reached with respect to the return of these people. We believe that such studies should also include the possibility of the return of these people to Bikini even though there may be a continuing military requirement to conduct military observations or operations on the atoll. While freedom of action on an uninhabited island unquestionably would be much greater, we believe careful consideration should be given to the proposition that military requirements and the larger United States political interest in the Trust Territory can both be accommodated and the Bikini people returned.

I cannot stress too strongly the urgency of a determination with respect to Bikini and the desire of the people to return. We are convinced that a favorable decision on this point will be a major contribution to achieving the overall political goals which we have agreed upon for the Trust Territory.

Sincerely yours,

Secretary of the Interior

Hon. Paul H. Nitze
 Deputy Secretary of Defense
 The Pentagon
 Washington, D.C. 20301

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