

REVIEWED BY J FELDMAN

DATE 1/9/86

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WASHINGTON  
TAB E

June 11, 1968

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Dear Paul:

I want to join Stewart Udall in urging that the Department of Defense reach an early--and hopefully favorable--decision on whether we will permit the return of the former people of Bikini to their native area.

We fully appreciate the military importance of the Trust Territory, but I would like to emphasize that the problem, which may seem relatively marginal in a practical sense, is politically quite important. A misstep in our handling of the island's disposition could have unfortunate effects on the receptivity of the Micronesian people toward our increasing base requirements in the Territory. Our program for the Territory's permanent association with the United States could be threatened as well.

In view of these risks, I urge that extra weight be given to political considerations in your evaluation of alternative sites for the military facilities that might be established on Bikini. Although it may prove physically difficult, we would see no basic political problem if the inhabitants of Bikini were permitted to return even though the island were simultaneously used for military purposes.

The Honorable  
Paul H. Nitze,  
Deputy Secretary of Defense.

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A prompt and favorable decision on Bikini would, of course, be helpful in terms of present discussion in Micronesia and Washington about the Territory's political future.

Sincerely,



Nicholas deB. Katzenbach

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