

14  
NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL

August 1, 1968

NOTE FOR MR. SCHWARTZ

Lou --

Here are two items relating to the "Return to Bikini" project. One, the Interior Department package and two, a draft statement that the AEC proposes to issue after the White House announcement has been made.

I think the Interior Department package is complete. It could be released in toto minus the classified cover memorandum and also minus the letter to the High Commissioner.

I will be away from the office this afternoon, but you will be able to reach me at home (WO 6-8204) after 6:30.

  
Charles E. Johnson

*announced 8/12*

MEMORANDUM FOR THE PRESIDENT

SUBJECT: Return of the Bikini People

Attached is a classified memorandum from Secretary Udall transmitting an unclassified memorandum urging that you announce a governmental decision that the people of Bikini can now be safely relocated <sup>to</sup> on their home island. The Secretary also proposes a draft White House announcement for this purpose and draft memoranda for your signature to the Secretary of Defense, the AEC and the BoB directing them to carry out the resettlement.

Secretary Udall's recommendation is strongly endorsed by the Secretaries of Defense and State and <sup>was</sup> also concurred in by Walt Rostow before he went on leave. Although the number of people involved is small, there is great interest in this matter at the United Nations and out in the Trust Territory itself. High Commissioner Norwood has been working on this project with the <sup>AEC and the</sup> military authorities involved and has been strongly urging its approval at the earliest possible date.

Those who have reviewed this matter feel that a White House announcement would give much greater visibility to this symbolic act of peace, and it is anticipated that there will be a generally favorable reaction to the announcement in free Asia and in all the LDCs.

*S* ~~Brom - The latest on this is:~~

- ~~① George Christian agrees with WH announcement, if President approves~~
- ~~② Chuck Johnson is in process of preparing a complete memo to President August 2, 1968 for your signature. 13~~
- ~~③ George C. strongly suggests any memo to Pres be also sent (in copy) to George Abenstein and to Jim Jones at the Ranch.~~

*Low S.  
8/2/68*

If you approve a White House announcement, the materials are ready for release at the ranch. Questions and answers and maps have been provided the <sup>P</sup> <sup>Office</sup> ~~press~~ and a member of the NSC staff and Mr. Milner, Deputy Director of the <sup>Interior Department</sup> ~~Office of Territories in Interior~~, are available to assist in briefing the White House press corps if this is thought desirable.

Bromley Smith

Enclosure



~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

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 Ujelang 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.

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

DECLASSIFIED

Authority 5012356, Sec. 3.3  
Interior Dept letter 11-17-82  
By Delt, NARA, Date 1-9-89

CONFIDENTIAL

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  
LOP  
Charles Johnson-RSC ✓  
Joseph Fouchard-ABC  
Harrison Holland-Defense  
Don McHenry-State  
HiCom Horwood

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156

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

Memorandum

To: The President  
From: Secretary of the Interior  
Subject: Return of the Bikini People

In 1946 the United States found it necessary to move the people of Bikini from their atoll in order to permit the area to be used for atomic testing. These people, originally about 150, were ultimately settled on Kili island in the southern Marshalls. They have never adjusted to Kili, which is small and has no lagoon, and have retained an intense desire to return to Bikini.

In early 1967, at my request and that of Trust Territory High Commissioner Norwood, the Atomic Energy Commission made a special survey of the atoll in order to determine whether radiation levels were such as to enable people safely to live on its islands. Following this intensive survey of the atoll and a review by a special committee of consultants, an affirmative conclusion was reached. Attached is a copy of the special committee's report. The committee concluded that Bikini Atoll, site of more than 20 nuclear tests between 1946 and 1958, is once again safe for human habitation.

At my request, the Secretary of Defense has pushed ahead with a special study of security requirements in that part of the Pacific and has advised me that return of the people to Bikini is compatible with those requirements. The Defense Department may wish to install some unmanned devices, such as radar towers, and on a limited scale station personnel on the atoll, but these activities will not prevent resettlement by the Bikinians nor be inconsistent with the re-establishment of their normal life on the atoll.

The 1967 AEC survey team undertook an intensive study of the atoll measuring external radiation levels and the radioactivity content of soil, water and plants and of animal life. The last previous survey had been made in 1964 as a part of continuing studies of the atoll since 1946.

The survey team noted that vegetation on the islands of the atoll is dense and that the populations of birds and the marine life of the lagoon were large. However, the coconut trees which are the basis of human life and the economy of coral atolls had been destroyed during the tests. The density of the new vegetation has largely checked their recovery.

The results of the survey have been analyzed by a special committee of consultants. The consultants concluded that:

"The exposures to radiation that would result from repatriation of the Bikini people do not offer a significant threat to their health and safety."

Although the consultants have judged the radiation levels on the atoll now to be acceptable, they made several recommendations for reducing exposure even further. These recommendations include:

- (1) Restrict living areas to the major islands of Eneu (Enyu) and Bikini for the present and cover the village area with a layer of coral rock to reduce further the low level of radiation from the soil;
- (2) Clean out the present population of strontium 90-bearing coconut crabs, which form a part of the diet of Pacific Islanders;
- (3) Remove the radioactive scrap metal which still remains on some of the islands near the test sites; and
- (4) Maintain a continual monitoring of the islands and the population to assure that they do not, in some unforeseen way, accumulate a greater radiation dose than predicted.

The committee of consultants also recommended that resettlement be initiated on Eneu island because of its very low contamination level. "No radiological precautions will be needed on Eneu," the committee reported.

We would propose to follow the recommendations of the consultants in developing a resettlement program. A copy of their report is attached for your information.

Return of the Bikini people cannot be immediate although we should take immediate steps to begin their return. A comprehensive plan must be developed; any remaining sources of major contamination removed; the overgrowth of uneconomic vegetation cleared; the land planted to productive crops; and new housing and community facilities built. We propose to do this with the active participation of the Bikini people in both the planning and execution stages. It will, however, also require the active cooperation of the Department of Defense, the Atomic Energy Commission and, in seeking funds for the resettlement project, the Bureau of the Budget.

Our tentative time table calls for the High Commissioner within the next few weeks to ask the Bikini people to name a group of their leaders to work in the planning stage. The second step is an on-island survey of the atoll to select those sites required by the Defense Department and to plan the location of the new village. At this stage, it is expected that the

preliminary resettlement plan will be drafted with the Bikini leadership participating. The visit to Bikini should take place in the last half of August or in early September. During the fall the plan would be completed and cost estimates presented.

Depending upon the availability of funds, the initial contingent of returnees might be settled within a year. Bikini workers would be engaged in clearing, planting, and building activities. Return of all of the Bikinians now living on Kili might be accomplished within two years. However, resettlement assistance will be required for a much longer period. The atoll is now virtually devoid of edible or economic plants and a feeding program will be required until subsistence foodcrops reach adequate levels and commercial crops come into production. It takes approximately seven years for newly planted coconuts to become fully productive. The coconut is essential to life on a coral atoll, providing food, drink, building materials, and, equally important, virtually the sole source of cash.

There is attached a draft announcement regarding the proposed resettlement of the Bikini people. Bikini and the desire of the people on Kili to return has recently been in the news and there continues to be widespread interest in these people. For these reasons, I request and urge your public announcement of the decision that the Bikini people can and will be relocated on their home atoll of Bikini.

Secretary of the Interior





156

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.

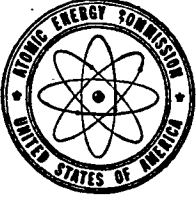
Sincerely yours,

Secretary of the Interior

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

16

**OFFICIAL USE ONLY**



UNITED STATES  
**ATOMIC ENERGY COMMISSION**  
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20545

July 31, 1968

Mr. Charles Johnson  
National Security Council  
Executive Office Building  
Washington, D. C. 20506

Dear Chuck:

As we discussed on the phone this morning, attached is the statement which Chairman Seaborg would issue on behalf of the Commission concerning the return to Bikini. We plan to distribute the statement after the White House announcement has been issued. If you have any questions, please give me a call.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Joe".

Joseph J. Fouchard, Assistant  
Director for News Operations  
Division of Public Information

Attachment

**OFFICIAL USE ONLY**

AEC CHAIRMAN SEABORG ISSUES STATEMENT ON BIKINI

(Dr. Glenn T. Seaborg, Chairman of the U. S. Atomic Energy Commission, today issued the following statement on AEC's role in the decision to allow the former residents of Bikini to return to their atoll.)

It has been greatly satisfying to my fellow Commissioners and me to take part in the decision, announced today by President Johnson, to return the Bikinians to their atoll. The attached AEC report on the radiation survey of Bikini was a cornerstone of that decision.

The report, which declares the atoll once again safe for human habitation, represents the work of many highly qualified men, including the scientific team which surveyed the islands in 1967 and the special consultant committee of experts who produced the report.

It has been just over 10 years since the last nuclear test took place at Bikini on July 22, 1958. The intervening years have brought a remarkable recovery on the islands, as AEC sponsored research teams noted in both 1964 and 1967.

The 1967 survey was made at the request of the Secretary of the Interior whose department is responsible for the welfare of the Bikini natives. The Bikinians were moved from their atoll in 1946 before the first nuclear test took place.

The team which visited the atoll in 1967 included radiological and health physicists, marine biologists, a tropical

(more)

agriculturalist, an anthropologist and representatives of the Pacific Islands Trust Territories, Department of the Interior.

Eight of the most highly qualified experts available were asked to review the survey material. After meeting with members of the survey team and examining their reports, these consultants reached the unanimous conclusion that it would be radiologically safe to allow the Bikini people to return to their home atoll. Their report was forwarded to the Secretary of the Interior earlier this month.

While Bikini is best known as a weapons testing site, it has also contributed significantly to man's knowledge of the long term effects of radiation on an environment.

During the years when radiation levels were too high for people to live there permanently, the AEC sponsored several scientific studies on the atoll. In fact, Bikini truly served as a living ecological laboratory.

Before it was either a proving ground or laboratory, though, Bikini was a home land. Having been closely associated with nuclear energy, and Bikini, for all these years, I find it particularly gratifying now to take part in the atoll's return to usefulness as a home for the Bikinian people.

Copies of the technical data from <sup>the</sup> ~~that~~ survey are available for examination at the Public Document Room in AEC's Washington office at 1717 H Street.

#

# TRUST TERRITORY of the PACIFIC ISLANDS

## NORTHERN MARIANA, CAROLINE, AND MARSHALL ISLANDS

OCEAN AREA APPROXIMATELY 3,000,000 Sq. Miles  
LAND AREA APPROXIMATELY 700 Sq. Miles  
2,141 ISLANDS

- OFFICE OF THE HIGH COMMISSIONER
- DISTRICT ADMINISTRATOR
- DISTRICT ADMINISTRATOR'S REPRESENTATIVE
- X UNINHABITED

**MARSHALL ISLANDS DISTRICT**  
AREA 69.84 Sq. Mi.

**MARIANA ISLANDS DISTRICT**  
AREA 183.50 Sq. Mi.

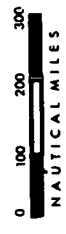
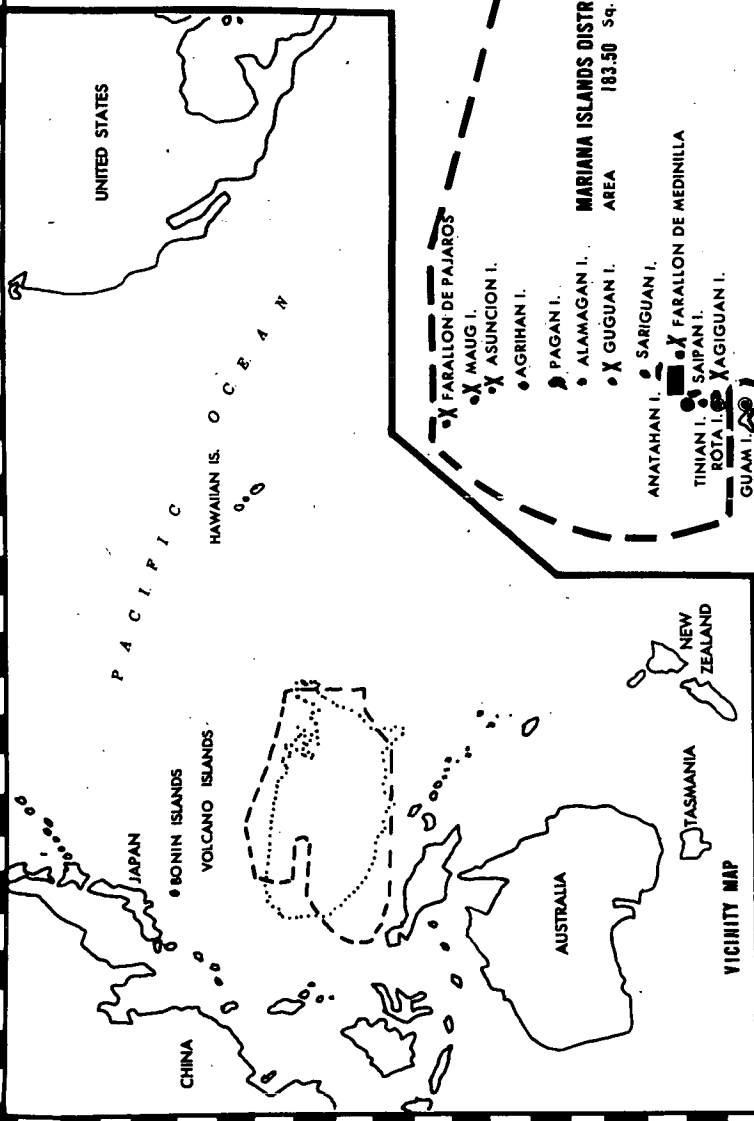
**PONAPE DISTRICT**  
AREA 175.68 Sq. Mi.

**TRUK DISTRICT**  
AREA 45.74 Sq. Mi.

**YAP DISTRICT**  
AREA 45.89 Sq. Mi.

**WESTERN CAROLINE ISLANDS**  
**PALAU DISTRICT**  
AREA 179.35 Sq. Mi.

**EASTERN CAROLINE ISLANDS**



NOTE: Broken lines indicate territorial area and districts of jurisdiction and are not to be interpreted as boundaries.

