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by the way
collected notes and comment
by john griffin

victory at Eniwetok

It didn't get much attention, but the people of Micronesia won an important environmental and politically symbolic victory this month.

The Pentagon agreed to call off the Pacific Cratering Experiments (PACE) tests at Eniwetok atoll in the Marshall Islands.

PACE was the modest term for some two dozen explosions of from five to 500 tons of TNT on this small (2.2 square miles of land on various islets) the U.S. made famous and infamous with its nuclear tests after World War II. This time the plan was to simulate nuclear effects.

Federal Judge Sam King here ordered the program halted in January after protests by lawyers representing groups sympathetic to the people of Eniwetok. They charged the PACE blasts would do more massive damage to the environment of islands slowly recovering from the nuclear tests.

Court action was a major victory that showed American environmental concerns extend to Micronesia, and it seemed likely the Pentagon would lose if the case came to trial.

The decision to give up the project without that battle also has its political implications. The PACE project left a bad taste in many Micronesian minds at a time when leaders there were negotiating with the U.S. for a new political status.

For the people of Eniwetok, who were moved elsewhere in 1947, it means they can now plan to go home at long last.