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Week in Review

SUMMARY OF NEWS OF THE TRUST TERRITORY OF THE PACIFIC ISLANDS

Prepared by Micronesian News Service

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BIKINI RETURN POSTPONED

The long-awaited return of the people of Bikini to their home islands will have to be awaited awhile longer, following the announcement last week that the people, meeting on Kili where they have resided for nearly twenty-five years, have decided the time is not yet ripe for their repatriation.

Government officials had planned to send two field trip ships to Kili on or about May 15 to make the transfer of the 360 people and their household effects to Bikini, where 40 new houses await them. The Trust Territory has been in the process of rehabilitating the former atomic test site since radiocative debris was removed several years ago. Eventually 78 houses are to be constructed, and vast plantations of coconuts and other food crops are under cultivation.

The people, however, have asked through their elected leaders for an ex gratia payment of three million dollars from the United States in payment for the suffering and losses they have incurred as the result of the atomic tests that took place in their atoll. They point out that the people of Eniwetok, who had suffered similar deprivations, received a payment of one million dollars in 1970. A delegation from the Kili Island Council, accompanied by Congress of Micronesia Representative Ataji Balos, went to Washington, D.C. last month to present a petition to the Defense and Interior Departments asking for the money.

Returning to Majuro last week, the delegation traveled by boat to Kili where a meeting was held. Although the delegation had been well-received in Washington and there were indications their request would be given sympathetic consideration, the people voted to inform the government that they would not return to Bikini until they receive the payment. They drafted a statement to that effect which was incorporated into a joint news release issued last week in Majuro by the Marshalls District Government and the Micronesian Legal Services Corporation, which is providing legal counsel to the people. Thus the return to Bikini is postponed indefinitely.

IROIJ OPPOSE CONSTITUTIONAL CONVENTION

The traditional leaders of the Marshall Islands, the Iroi, issued a proclamation last week declaring their unanimous support for the actions of the district legislature, the Nitijela, in opposing Marshallese participation in the forthcoming Micronesian Constitutional Convention. "...we fully support the Nitijela in its determination that not one of us in our islands should