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March 24, 1975

STATEMENT OF CONGRESSMAN ATAJI BALOS, MEMBER
OF THE CONGRESS OF MICRONESIA, BEFORE THE
SUBCOMMITTEE ON TERRITORIAL AND INSULAR AFFAIRS
OF THE INTERIOR AND INSULAR AFFAIRS COMMITTEE
OF THE UNITED STATES HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Mr. Chairman and Honorable Members of the Committee:

It is a privilege and an honor to appear before you today on behalf of the people of Bikini of the Marshall Islands District of the Trust Territory of the Pacific. The people of Bikini recognize the important role this Committee plays in helping the United States fulfill its obligations as Trustee of the Trust Territory and we appreciate an opportunity to speak briefly before you this morning.

Mr. Chairman, I am here today to request that you approve, with slight modification, H.R. 5158, introduced by Representative Burton, which authorizes an "ex gratia" payment of \$3,000,000 to the people of Bikini for hardships suffered due to displacement from Bikini since 1946. For reasons which follow, we believe the Burton bill is far superior to the Steiger bill, H.R. 5215, which authorizes a payment of \$2,270,000, and which is also before this Committee.

Mr. Chairman, as you know, in 1946 the people of Bikini agreed to give up their island so that the United States could use the Atoll to conduct a series of atomic

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tests for world peace. Since that time, we have moved three times, eventually resettling on the small island of Kili where we have remained for most of the period since our departure from Bikini. The living conditions on Kili are far less desirable than on Bikini. Kili lacks a protective reef which makes the fishing poor. The island is also considerably smaller than Bikini and consequently, we have been unable to provide sufficient food for our people. For many years, we have longed to return to Bikini.

Mr. Chairman, as you may know, the people of Enewetak Island were compelled to abandon their island in 1947, one year after the people of Bikini left Bikini. Enewetak was also the site of atomic tests. In 1969, the Department of Defense made an "ex gratia" payment in the amount of \$1,020,000 to the Enewetak people in recognition of the suffering endured during their exile.

Mr. Chairman, 6 long years have passed since the payment was made to the people of Enewetak and no payment has yet been made to the people of Bikini. The people of Bikini feel that it is only fair that they be treated the same as the Enewetakese. We feel that the \$3,000,000 "ex gratia" payment authorized in the Burton bill is appropriate because, comparing our situation to that of the Enewetakese, the people of Bikini have been in exile for a longer period; there are approximately 750 Bikinians,

whereas there are only approximately 400 Enewetakese; and equally importantly, the people of Enewetak were paid their sum of \$1,020,000 approximately 6 years ago - 6 years in which the Enewetakese have had the benefit of the present use of their money, as well as the accrual of large amounts of interest. In addition, during those 6 years the rate of inflation in the Trust Territory has been even higher than the unprecedented inflation rate in the United States.

Mr. Chairman, as I have indicated, we are quite happy with the Burton bill and strongly endorse the \$3,000,000 "ex gratia" payment which that bill would authorize. However, there is one provision contained in both the Steiger bill and the Burton bill which we would like to have amended. Both bills, as presently written, would provide that the "ex gratia" payment be made to a trustee selected by the Kili/Bikini Council and approved by the High Commissioner of the Trust Territory and that the provisions of the trust agreement be agreed to by the Kili/Bikini Council and also approved by the High Commissioner. We feel that the selection of a trustee and approval of the trust document should be the sole responsibility of the Kili/Bikini Council. By relieving the High Commissioner of this responsibility any potential questions of mismanagement of the trust funds by the United States would be avoided and the Kili/Bikini Council would bear, as we feel it should, the full burden

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of acting responsibly in agreeing to a trust agreement and selecting a trustee. Accordingly, we have attached to this statement, a draft bill which would retain the \$3,000,000 authorization contained in the Burton bill but which would incorporate the changes regarding the trust fund which we have suggested.

Mr. Chairman, in conclusion, for the reasons I have briefly listed, we hope that you will support H.R. 5158, a \$3,000,000 "ex gratia" payment for the people of Bikini.

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A BILL

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives
of the United States of America in Congress assembled. That
there is authorized to be appropriated to the Secretary of
the Interior the sum of \$3,000,000, ex gratia, to be paid
to the Kili/Bikini Council, Marshall Islands, Trust Territory
of the Pacific Islands, in recognition of the hardship
suffered by the people of the Bikini due to displacement from
their Atoll since 1946. Such sum shall be paid to a trustee
to be selected by the Kili/Bikini Council to be held in trust
pursuant to the provisions of a trust agreement or amendment
thereto agreed to by the Kili/Bikini Council for the use and
benefit of and distribution to persons who possess rights
in Bikini Atoll. Provisions may be made in the trust instru-
ment for disbursement of trust income and corpus by the
trustee directly to the Kili/Bikini Council for distribution,
according to custom and tradition, to persons who possess
rights in Bikini Atoll.

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STATEMENT OF JUSTIFICATION
FOR AN "EX GRATIA" PAYMENT OF \$3,000,000

It is well known that in 1969 the people of Ujelang received a \$1,020,000 "ex gratia" payment from the Department of Defense for suffering endured during twenty-five years of forced exile on Ujelang. The Bikini people feel that our suffering has been at least as severe as that endured by the Ujelangese.

In a meeting with the representatives of the Office of Territories, Department of Interior, and the High Commissioner of the Trust Territory on April 3, 1974, Mr. Russell Carpenter, Director of the Office of Territorial Affairs, stated that he fully supported the demands of the Bikini people for a fair and equitable "ex gratia" payment. Though our right to payment is not in issue, uncertainty remains as to the precise amount of the payment.

As noted in the attached Petition, we believe that a fair sum for the "ex gratia" payment is \$3,000,000. We begin with the fact that \$1,020,000 was accorded to the people of Ujelang over four years ago. It is clear on the basis of a number of factors that our payment should be substantially higher than that made to the Ujelangese. First and most important, there are approximately 750 Bikinians, whereas there are only approximately 400 Ujelangese.

Second, the people of Ujelang were paid their sum of \$1,020,000 over four years ago, and thus have been accruing interest for over four years. This "lost" interest should be included in the payment made to the Bikinians.

Third, since 1969 when the people of Ujelang received their payment, inflation has been rampant in the Trust Territory. For example, a can of corned beef cost 75 cents in 1969 whereas today the same can costs more than twice that amount (\$1.60). In 1969 a twenty-five pound bag of rice was \$3.00, whereas today it is more than three times that amount (\$9.00). In 1969 fresh fish sold for 25 cents per pound, whereas today the cost is more than 80 cents per pound.

Fourth, even a \$3,000,000 payment will not satisfy the per capita earning needs of the Bikini people. For example, if the \$3,000,000 "ex gratia" payment is invested at a 4% per year rate of return, the amounts which will be realized by individual Bikinians will still be less than \$15.00 per month.

It is, of course, difficult to quantify with precision the dollar value of the hardships suffered by the Bikinian people over the past twenty-seven years. Nevertheless, based on the factors cited above, we believe

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\$3,000,000 is an appropriate sum in light of the \$1,020,000 received by the Ujelangese. Since four years have already passed since the Ujelangese received their payment, we believe our payment should be made within six months of the date of the attached Petition. Within ninety days of the date of the Petition a firm written response to this request for a \$3,000,000 "ex gratia" payment should be given to the Bikini people. As a further gesture of good will, a letter of understanding should be executed immediately by the undersigned representatives of the Bikini people and representatives of the United States Government signifying a commitment by the United States that (a) within three months of the date of the Petition it will answer the Bikinians' request for an "ex gratia" payment, and (b) within six months of the same date, if the request is approved, the "ex gratia" payment will be made to the Bikini people forthrightly.

Love Kessibuki
Magistrate Love Kejibuki

Nathan Note
Scribe Nathan Note

Moses Lewaj
Councilman Moses Lewaj

Ataji Balos
Congressman Ataji Balos

April 10, 1974

Note: Received by Shirley Carpenter - 4/10/74
Received by Thomas J. Bigley (RADIA) - 4/11/74

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BIKINI ISLAND VISITING MISSION
ON AN "EX GRATIA" PAYMENT

PETITION FOR AN "EX GRATIA" PAYMENT OF
THREE MILLION DOLLARS TO THE PEOPLE OF BIKINI

WHEREAS, for the peace and welfare of all mankind the people of Bikini for the past twenty-seven years have sacrificed greatly; and

WHEREAS, in 1946, at the direction of the Military Governor of the Marshall Islands the people of Bikini relinquished their homes and moved to the island of Kili; and

WHEREAS, since the end of World War II and up to 1969, the island of Bikini has been used by the United States Government as a testing facility for atomic weapons; and

WHEREAS, because of the availability of Bikini as an atomic testing site, the United States Government has been able to maintain its lead in nuclear weapons, and protect the peace of the world and the hopes of mankind; and

WHEREAS, during this twenty-seven year period the people of Bikini have remained on Kili, an island in the southern part of the Marshall Islands, they have experienced great longing to return to their homeland and desire to return when the island is safe and the repair work completed; and

WHEREAS, during this period the people of Bikini have suffered great hardships because of absence from their native land; and

WHEREAS, the people of Enewetak were also compelled to abandon their island in 1947, one year after

the people of Bikini left Bikini; and

WHEREAS, the people of Enewetak also have suffered great hardship as a result of this forced migration; and

WHEREAS, in 1970 the Department of Defense, in recognition of the suffering endured by the Enewetakese, made an "ex gratia" payment in the amount of \$1,020,000 to the Enewetak people; and

WHEREAS, such "ex gratia" payment was well deserved by the people of Enewetak; and

WHEREAS, the people of Bikini, being the first group to leave their homeland during the years of atomic testing, have suffered at least equally to the people of Enewetak; and

WHEREAS, the people of Bikini deserve the same fair treatment that has been accorded to the Enewetakese; and

WHEREAS, over four years have passed since the payment was made to the people of Enewetak, and no payment has yet been made to the people of Bikini; and

WHEREAS, the Bikini people feel that based upon the Enewetak payment, as suitably adjusted for time and population differences, an "ex gratia" payment of \$3,000,000 is due to the Bikini people; and

WHEREAS, in the Statement of Justification, attached to this Resolution, reasons are given in support of the \$3,000,000 payment; now, therefore

BE IT RESOLVED, by the people of Bikini, through their duly elected island officials, that the United States Government, the Department of Defense, the Atomic Energy

Commission, and the Department of Interior, Office of Territories, are hereby requested to grant to the Bikini people an "ex gratia" payment of \$3,000,000 to be delivered to the people within six months following the date this Petition is signed and delivered to the United States Government.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that copies of this Petition be delivered to the Office of the President, United States Senate, the Speaker of the House of Representatives, the Department of Defense, Office of International Security Affairs, the Department of Interior, Office of Territories, the Atomic Energy Commission, the Congress of Micronesia, the High Commissioner of the Trust Territory, and the Marshall Islands Nitijela.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that this Petition has been duly authorized by the people of Bikini.

Love Kejibuki
Magistrate Love Kejibuki

Nathan Note
Scribe Nathan Note

Moses Lewaj
Councilman Moses Lewaj

Ataji Balos
Congressman Ataji Balos

April 10, 1974

*Note: Received by Mr. Stanley Carpenter - 4/10/74
Received by Thomas J. Blk Bigley (RADAR) - 4/11/74*

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