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JONATHAN M. WEISGALL

September 30, 1988

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President Ronald Reagan
The White House
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear President Reagan:

On September 27, you signed into law the Interior appropriations bill as P.L. 100-446. One provision of that bill provides funds to the people of Bikini Atoll in the Marshall Islands to conduct a radiological cleanup and resettlement of their islands.

The legacy of the Bikinians is well known. In 1946 they agreed to the U.S. Navy's request that they move off their homeland in order to facilitate the U.S. nuclear testing program at Bikini, which lasted from 1946-1958. In 1968, President Johnson, relying on an Atomic Energy Commission study, announced that Bikini Atoll was safe and that the people could return home. Sadly, the AEC was proved wrong when studies in 1978 concluded that Bikini Island's levels of radiation exceeded federal standards. The Bikinians were moved off their homeland once again and cannot return permanently until Bikini Island is cleaned up.

The funds appropriated by Congress and approved by you are designed to accomplish that goal. As Senator McClure stated in the Congressional Record: "I am particularly pleased for the people of Bikini, to whom the United States has owed so much, and I am pleased that the United States has now met its responsibility to them."

In 1946 the people of Bikini gave the United States everything they had -- their land and their homes. They demanded nothing in return; they asked only that their land be returned to them when it had served its purpose. More than four decades later, thanks to your Administration, the United States has fulfilled its commitment to the Bikinians. The Bikinians are no longer victims. As Senator Johnston stated in the Senate earlier this month, the Bikinians will soon "have the means to return to their homeland, to regain control of their lives, and to live in dignity."



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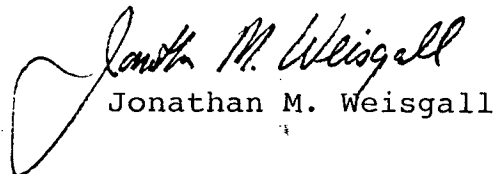
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Only one U.S. President -- Harry Truman -- has ever thanked the Bikini people for sacrificing their homeland to make way for the atom bomb and ensure U.S. nuclear strength. In 1946, following the first Bikini test, Senator Carl Hatch of New Mexico visited the Bikinians on Rongerik Atoll, their new home. According to a July 17, 1946 article in The New York Times by the Pulitzer Prize-winning journalist William Laurence, Senator Hatch told the Bikinians: "The President knows the sacrifice you have made and he is deeply grateful for that. You have made a true contribution to the progress of mankind" The Bikini leader, dubbed as "King Judā" by the press, was then presented with chocolate bars, a globe, pipe, cigarette holder, matches, a carton of cigarettes -- and a set of photographs showing the first atomic test at Bikini.

Hasn't the time come, after 42 years, for the U.S. President to thank the Bikini people for their sacrifices, and for the Bikinians to thank you for helping them to return home? Your Administration has been frequently criticized for not caring for the less fortunate, but the fact is that you and Vice President Bush, who has taken a personal interest in this matter, will long be remembered by the Bikinians as the U.S. leaders who finally lived up to America's promise to return them to their home.

On behalf of my clients, the people of Bikini, I would therefore like to suggest a White House meeting to commemorate the signing of P.L. 100-446. This historic legislation will permit the United States and the Bikinians to turn from this nuclear legacy of the past and look toward the future. The Bikini leaders would like to mark this event with you, and they ask you to give their request your serious consideration.

Sincerely,



Jonathan M. Weisgall

JMW/cm

cc: Vice President George Bush
Secretary of State George P. Shultz
Mr. James D. Berg
Director, Office of Freely Associated State Affairs
U.S. State Department