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STATEMENT OF UNDERSTANDING ON THE PART OF THE GOVERNMENT OF THE UNITED STATES	

AND THE GOVERNMENT OF THE TRUST TERRITORY OF THE PACIFIC ISLANDS

CONCERNING THE

MOVE OF THE PEOPLE OF BIKINI ISLAND, AUGUST, 1978

1. On August 11, 1978, the Undersecretary of the Department of the
2. Interior, James A. Joseph, the Deputy Undersecretary, Wallace Green, and
3. the Director of the Office of Territorial Affairs, Ruth G. Van Cleve,
4. journeyed to Bikini Island to meet with its current residents. The purpose
5. of their meeting was to convey information on the subject of the forthcoming
6. move by the people of Bikini Island to Kili Island, and to respond to ques-
7. tions and hear concerns put to them by the people of Bikini Island. They
8. had earlier, on August 7, held a similar meeting with former residents of
9. Bikini who now reside on Kili. The High Commissioner of the Trust Territory
10. of the Pacific Islands, Adrian F. Winkel, had been prevented by bad weather
11. in Saipan from joining in the visit to Bikini Island, but he had earlier met
12. with the people of Bikini, as well as with other Bikinians on Kili.

13.
14. In 1946, the people of Bikini were removed from their atoll by the
15. U. S. Navy in order to enable the United States to use the atoll for a
16. nuclear testing program which lasted until 1958. The islanders were moved
17. first to Rongerik, then to Kwajalein, and ultimately to Kili. In the late
18. 1960's, it appeared that levels of radiation on Bikini atoll were such that
19. the people could return to and use a number of the major islands of the atoll.
20. Beginning in 1969, a clean-up of the atoll and a rehabilitation program was
21. begun. In the early 1970's, some Bikini people were employed in the project
22. and the Bikini Island population increased to approximately 140 in 1970. In
23. 1977, the intake of radionuclides by the people living on Bikini Island had
24. increased to alarming proportions, and a major feeding program was insti-
25. tuted. April, 1978 surveys showed that the feeding program had not resulted

1. in a decrease in the radionuclide body burden. The Department of the
2. Interior decided, in the light of the evidence presented by the Department
3. of Energy, that the people living on Bikini should be moved at the earliest
4. possible date. An aerial/radiological survey currently underway and other
5. radiological tests on Bikini being conducted by the Department of Energy
6. will determine whether Bikini atoll can, in the foreseeable future, be
7. considered as a home for the Bikini people.

8.

9. Among the requests of the people of both Bikini and Kili was a
10. request for a statement in writing of the understandings that the repre-
11. sentatives of the United States conveyed during those meetings and of the
12. commitments that those representatives were willing to make. The follow-
13. ing are intended to respond to the principal concerns then and there
14. expressed.*

15.

16. Mr. Joseph and Mrs. Van Cleve, on behalf of the Government of the
17. United States, and Mr. Winkel, on behalf of the Government of the Trust
18. Territory, offered the following assurances:

19.

20. 1. The Government of the United States considers itself generally
21. responsible for the well being of the Bikini people and their descendents
22. and, following consultation with them, the Government of the United States
23. will seek to arrange their relocation, permanently, in the most satisfactory
24. manner possible. The Department of the Interior will undertake to obtain
25. such authority and such resources as may be required in order to meet and

On August 14, 1978, soon after the Bikini and Kili meetings, the four
officers referred to above were involved in a major airplane accident
off the coast of Guam. Although they were among the survivors, their
notes taken at the meetings sunk with the airplane. This statement,
drafted by Mrs. Van Cleve on August 15 at the Guam Naval Hospital is
intended to be as full as recollections permit, but in the circumstances
it may not be complete.

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1. discharge this responsibility. The Department of the Interior will call upon
2. other agencies of the United States Government to assist it, particularly the
3. Department of Energy, so as to assure that, among other things, the medical
4. needs of the current residents of Bikini Island continue to be met.

5.

6. II. Because Kili Island has, until recent weeks, been regarded as
7. solely a temporary relocation site for the people of Bikini, the Governments
8. have never undertaken to construct permanent facilities there, nor to improve
9. significantly any of the existing Kili facilities. It is now known that
10. Bikini Island will not be fit for human habitation for decades to come, and
11. on the basis of the most recent scientific information, it appears that Eneu
12. Island, in the Bikini Atoll, will also be unavailable for settlement. In
13. the circumstances, the Governments understand that some of the Bikini people
14. will choose to remain on Kili indefinitely, and the Governments will accord-
15. ingly undertake a program for the permanent rehabilitation of Kili.

16.

17. III. It is not yet possible to develop a permanent relocation plan
18. for the people of Bikini. That plan must await completion of the aerial/
19. radiological survey that is now underway, and that is expected to be com-
20. pleted no later than the early weeks of 1979. When those survey results
21. are available and evaluated, and when any remaining scientific tests found
22. necessary are also completed, all of which developments are expected to
23. occur in the first months of 1979, it will be possible to identify safe
24. relocation sites. The Governments will then, following full consultation
25. with the people of Kili (including the current residents of Bikini Island
26. who will by then have relocated there), plan in detail for the relocation
27. of such Kili residents as choose to move elsewhere, affording to them a
28. choice among the possible relocation sites. Those who choose to remain on
29. Kili will be accommodated there.

30.

1. IV. The Governments understand that many, and possibly all, of the
2. current residents of Bikini Island would prefer, inasmuch as they cannot remain
3. on Bikini, to live on Eneu Island in the Bikini Atoll. Although the best
4. current information suggests that that will not be possible, if later
5. reports should show Eneu can be safely inhabited, the Governments pledge that
6. all Bikinians who choose to do so may move to Eneu, to the full extent that
7. the size and resources of Eneu permit.

8. V. In the meantime the Governments have constructed twenty-eight
9. temporary houses on Kili, one each for each family now residing on Bikini
10. Island. This construction is expected to be completed either by the day
11. on which the Bikini Island residents return to Kili, or within a few days
12. thereafter, depending upon weather conditions on Kili in the last half of
13. August, 1978. Because a visit to Kili reveals that certain necessary
14. community facilities there are either seriously inadequate or nonexistent,
15. the Governments will undertake forthwith the construction of certain temporary
16. facilities: a new dispensary, a new school, an addition to the church, and
17. an addition to the civic assembly building. These facilities, which are
18. expected to be completed by the fall of 1978, will be of temporary con-
19. struction because they can thereby be erected with great speed, and because
20. the need for them should not be left unmet during the several months during
21. which permanent facilities are planned and constructed. Such permanent
22. facilities will be provided as a part of the rehabilitation of Kili referred
23. to in assurance number II.

24. VI. The Governments recognize the necessity of providing a dock at
25. Kili. They will commence immediately to cause the engineering feasibility
26. of such a dock to be explored, and assuming both engineering feasibility
27. and the availability of the necessary funds, neither of which is expected
28. to pose a problem, the construction of a dock at Kili is expected to begin

1. in the spring of 1979.

2.
3. VII. The Governments recognize that the island of Bikini and the
4. Bikini Atoll are places of unique importance to the people of Bikini and
5. their descendants, and that it is therefore important to them to be able
6. to view and visit Bikini, even if only briefly. The Government of the
7. Trust Territory will therefore arrange, when Trust Territory shipping
8. schedules permit, to transport Bikini Residents living on Kili (including
9. the current Bikini Island residents about to move there) for visits from
10. time to time to Bikini. Such visits will necessarily be brief, and it
11. will not be possible for the Bikini visitors to reside, even briefly, on
12. Bikini Island nor, probably, on Eneu Island. Such brief visits will,
13. however, occur from time to time, as shipping schedules reasonably permit
14. and as the wishes of the Bikinians indicate.

15.
16. VIII. The Governments recognize that the current residents of
17. Bikini Island will encounter personal hardships, as well as certain
18. expenses, attendant upon their forthcoming move. The Governments will
19. therefore, pay, as a lump sum relocation allowance, the sum of \$100.72
20. per person, to the head of each family on Bikini Island. That sum is
21. not intended to constitute compensation, in whole or in part, for any
22. damage the Bikini Island residents may be found to have sustained. It
23. is intended instead to be a one-time payment to facilitate their forth-
24. coming move to Kili Island. The Government of the United States has
25. arranged for the current Bikini Island residents to stop at Kwajalein,
26. while enroute to Kili, to make purchases there.

27.
28. The Governments recognize that the foregoing provisions are not intended to
29. be exhaustive. They are intended to respond to the major concerns ex-
30. pressed at the meeting on Bikini and Kili on August 11 and 7, 1978.

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James G. Joseph
Undersecretary of the Interior
Per APN

Ruth S. Van Ness
Director, Office of Territorial Affairs
Per APN

William P. Wick
High Commissioner, Trust Territory of
the Pacific Islands

Dated: August 16, 1978

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