

STATEMENT OF TOMAKI JUDA
MAGISTRATE OF THE KILI/BIKINI COUNCIL
BEFORE THE HOUSE APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE
SUBCOMMITTEE ON INTERIOR

June 19, 1978

Mr. Chairman:

My name of Tomaki Juda, Magistrate of the Kili Council. With me today are Nathan Note, Kessai Note and Jendrik Leviticus, as well as legal counsel Jonathan M. Weisgall of Covington & Burling in Washington, D.C. Of the four Bikinians before you today, only Jendrik Leviticus currently lives on Bikini.

Mr. Chairman, we accompanied High Commissioner Winkel on his recent trip to Bikini and Kili, and we held many long meetings with the people living on both islands. Based on these meetings, we can report to you that it is the strong wish of the people living on Bikini that they not leave their island. They told us that the President of the United States announced in 1968 that Bikini Island was safe, and they do not now understand why it has now been declared dangerous. Bikini had again become their home, and they are confused as to why they must leave once again.

This confusion was increased by a recent visit of Dr. Conard, who has regularly examined the Bikinians for many years on contract with the U.S. Government. Less than one week before we arrived with High Commissioner Winkel, Dr. Conard visited the people living on Bikini and told them that Eneu

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Island was safe and that they could eat and drink the cocoanuts on Bikini Island. The High Commissioner then arrived to announce that the people had to leave Bikini and that Eneu is not considered safe at this time.

After the assurances the Bikinians received from President Johnson in 1968, and especially in light of Dr. Conard's recent visit to the island, the people on Bikini were -- and still are -- reluctant to face the fact that they must leave. They have therefore asked us to convey two requests to you today, Mr. Chairman. The first is for you to clarify the comments made by Dr. Conard to the Bikinians and to determine with what authority he was speaking. It is possible that his statements were made on the basis of old information, but his comments, followed shortly by the High Commissioner's visit, resulted in distrust and confusion. The situation faced by the Bikinians is difficult enough as it is without having two well-recognized people visit Bikini within a short time of each other and make contradictory statements about a matter of such importance.

The second request we convey to you today, Mr. Chairman, is that your Subcommittee closely monitor the upcoming radiological and foodstuff tests to be conducted at Bikini Atoll. The people living on Bikini Island desperately wish to remain on Bikini Atoll, and they are hopeful that tests on Eneu Island

will show it to be safe. They understand that the recent test results are preliminary, and they hope that resettlement on Eneu will prove to be possible.

Mr. Chairman, we cannot describe the sorrow felt by our people as they learned -- with bitter disappointment -- that they must once again leave Bikini. Despite the contradictory statements of the U.S. Government over the last ten years, the people of Bikini have begun to understand the situation they face. They have told us that if the upcoming tests show that our people will not be able to live on Bikini or Eneu for the next 40 or 50 years, the people living on Bikini are prepared to relocate to Kili and Jaluit.

A move to Kili, however, and the establishment of Kili as a permanent home for the next two generations of Bikinians cannot come without help from the U.S. Government to develop Kili as a functional, liveable community. For almost 30 years, we have lived on Kili thinking each year that we will move to Bikini the next year. As we face the possibility of 50 more years on Kili, it is clear that we must think and plan in longer terms. As you know, Kili is an island with no reef and no lagoon, and access to the island is very difficult for most of the year. Faced with these conditions, our people have not processed copra in large quantities because boats visit the island rarely. Months frequently go by without a visit from

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passing ships, and our only communication with the rest of the world is by radio. The construction of a long pier on Kili would ~~enable us to regain our fishing skills because it would~~ enable boats to dock at Kili, encourage our people to process more copra, and provide a much needed tie to the rest of the Marshall Islands. Moreover, a pier would enable our people to regain their fishing skills and make us less dependent on shipments of surplus government food.

Other projects must be undertaken if Kili is to become our permanent home for the next two generations. A short, 2000-foot runway would help to break the isolation we feel from the rest of the world, and it would insure immediate aid in case of emergency. The few roads on Kili should be improved to enable us to transport copra more easily from one end of the island to another. A medical dispensary should be built, along with a new school, and our makeshift temporary homes, our community hall and our warehouse desperately need renovation. At the same time, you must realize that Kili is already overcrowded, and the return of so many people from Bikini will increase the Kili population by at least 20 percent. We therefore urge the High Commissioner to explore the possibility of relocating some of our people on Jabwor Island on Jaluit Atoll.


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Life on Kili is difficult, but with these improvements we are confident that our people can rally from these sorrowful days and make Kili a real home, with decent communication to the outside world and some kind of economic life. In addition, we feel that our people, especially the elderly ones, are entitled to compensation from the U.S. for the removal of our people from Bikini and for the virtual destruction of Bikini and other islands. Medical care will also be needed, especially for those people who have been living on Bikini -- and their future children. It is premature to discuss these questions at this time, however, since there has not been a final determination concerning the safety of Eneu. If, however, the upcoming tests show that the entire atoll is unsafe, we ask neither for your sympathy nor for your shared moral concern. We simply want and need your help to resettle our community and to let us try to become once again the people we were before the arrival of the atom and hydrogen bombs.