



United States Department of the Interior 401588

OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20240

JUL 15 1977

Dr. Joseph E. Trimble
Research Scientist
Social Change Study Center
Battelle Human Affairs Research Centers
Post Office Box 5395
Seattle, Washington 98105

Dear Dr. Trimble:

Your letter of July 5, 1977, on possible future research studies of readjustment of the peoples of Bikini and Enewetak after resettlement is being forwarded to the High Commissioner of the Trust Territory for his review and comment since any proposal of this nature would require his approval and cooperation, as well as that of the people concerned. Additionally, both groups have legal counsel of their own choosing who represent them and who also need to be consulted on any activity involving their clients.

We have several comments, though, since it seems that some confusion has resulted in treating the Bikini and Enewetak situations as similar. Dr. Robert Kiste, of course, is well known to us through his research in the Marshalls. The preliminary proposal for a study on readjustment of Bikinians we assume was drawn largely from his background knowledge and it is an interesting proposal.

However, the "Bikini research matrix" should not be superimposed in its entirety as a model for a followup study of the adjustment problems of the people of Enewetak. The people of Bikini were moved to Kili, an isolated island without a lagoon, and having other physical characteristics quite different from Bikini Atoll. The people of Enewetak Atoll have been living on Ujelang Atoll, which, although it is considerably smaller in extent than Enewetak Atoll, basically has similar atoll characteristics. For example, we doubt that the Ujelangese have now lost their lagoon fishing techniques as stated in your letter and given as an example of a readjustment pattern they have to relearn in Enewetak Atoll. They have undergone many privations but also as a result of these privations and isolation, have had to rely more on certain traditional methods than many other Marshallese. Neither have as many residents of Ujelang been dispersed throughout the Marshalls as is the case for the Kilians. Actually, except for students and a group of workers, relatively few of the Ujelang people are dispersed in comparison with the Bikinians. Obviously, there will be many similarities of readjustment between the two groups but they will not all necessarily be the same.

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Incidentally, you might be interested in a recent film on the people of Ujelang and the early return to Japtan. The film will be shown on the "ABC News Closeup" Program on Thursday, July 21 (10:00-11:00 p.m. EDT) on ABC Television. This film, done in collaboration with the people of Ujelang, their legal representatives, various agencies and the Trust Territory Government, originally had a segment on "traditional fishing methods used in the Ujelang lagoon." It may not be in the final version but the short film should be of considerable interest.

It should be kept in mind also that very intensive Master Plans have been developed for the relocation of both groups. Social Scientists participated in the preparation amongst them such anthropologists as Dr. Jack Tobin. Also, Dr. T. Scudder, Dr. Kiste, and Dr. Len Mason were involved to some degree in a consultant capacity, either formally or informally, on some aspects. Special thought has been given to planning for the future for these two groups.

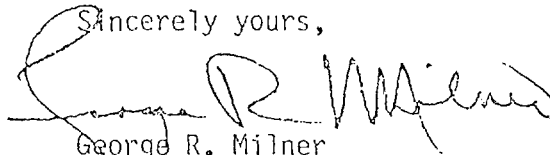
The two small groups of people, one group on Bikini Island, and one on Japtan Island in the Enewetak Atoll result from special circumstances. A small group of 50 people, members of the Ujelang Planning Council and their families, are on Japtan in order to be consulted on every phase of the cleanup and rehabilitation program which will be carried out during the next four years. The small community on Bikini Island is made up of Kili families, who on their own have gone back to Bikini prior to the official resettlement. Your statement that "you heard that recently a few Bikinians ate fruit contain cesium, a highly radioactive substance and became extremely ill" must be based on someone's misinformation. Recent monitoring of the small group of people on Bikini Island by the Brookhaven Laboratory Medical Team revealed that some of the people had an increased body burden of cesium-137. This increased level resulted from eating breadfruit and pandanus, which the people have been told not to eat, but which they could not resist. These levels though are far below the levels that would be expected to produce any detectable health effects. No one has become ill, and the medical authorities assure us that no one there is in any immediate danger. Nonetheless, even though the members of this small group have gone back on their own prior to the completion of the Bikini Resettlement Project, careful watch is kept on them, and the Trust Territory authorities are taking necessary steps to prevent any adverse health effect to any of the group.

Recently, there has been a great deal of newspaper publicity about Bikini and Enewetak. Much of it has been of a sensational nature, often resulting from examples from one area, such as the Rongelap fallout being

transferred to the people of Enewetak, etc. Statements by scientific experts are quoted out of context, resulting in a far from accurate description of current conditions.

You may be assured that various agencies concerned and the High Commissioner of the Trust Territory are watching the situation very closely.

Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "George R. Milner".

George R. Milner
Acting Director
Office of Territorial Affairs