



United States Department of the Interior

Marsh

OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20240

JUL 23 1979

Dr. Bruce W. Wachholz
Office of Environment
Department of Energy
Washington, D.C. 20545

Dear Dr. Wachholz:

I am enclosing for your information a copy of a letter dated July 10, 1979, from Mr. Ralph Waltz who had a number of comments on the "Notes" of the June 13 meeting on Bikini matters as well as a copy of my reply to him dated July 20, 1979.

Mr. Waltz raised a question relating to a comparison of the "Gamma Ray" levels on Eneu Island and Rongelap Island. He has noticed from the photographs distributed at the March 22, 1979, House Subcommittee on Interior Appropriations Hearing that the levels for Eneu and the main residential island on Rongelap appear to be the same. This leads to his question as to why were the Rongelapese allowed to return to the island in 1957 and are still allowed to stay there, while we now say that the Bikinians should not return to Eneu Island for at least another 25 years. I had no recourse but to answer that I would forward this question to your Department for comment.

I know, of course, that the detail maps of Rongelap have not been made available. I must confess that when we saw the first set of photographs on March 22, 1979, a somewhat similar thought as expressed by Mr. Waltz crossed our minds here. I realize, of course, that the residents of Rongelap are examined regularly, including "whole body count" examinations, and that regular monitoring of plants, soil, water, etc., on Rongelap has been carried out over the years. Presumably, the radiation levels there are not considered to pose a danger to the residents.

Mr. Waltz also dwells on the "Rongelap situation" in another aspect, i.e., he claims that some 25 of the residents of Bikini Island who were relocated last August had moved there from Rongelap Island and could have been contaminated on Rongelap which resulted in the higher body levels on Bikini Island.

*Dr. Wachholz
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request
comment*

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I would appreciate any comments you might have to offer on these questions.

Sincerely yours,

Ruth G. Van Cleve

Mrs. Ruth G. Van Cleve
Director
Office of Territorial Affairs

Enclosures