

Three testify risk blocks return to Bikini

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Three natives of Bikini who left the atoll in 1946 after the United States picked the island as the site of nuclear tests told Federal Judge Samuel P. King yesterday they want to go back.

However, they won't until they think it is safe to do so.

Their appearance was part of a legal effort to warn persons who might return to Bikini as permanent residents that there is a radiation risk.

Bikini was the location of about 23 nuclear tests from 1946 through 1958. During that time, the people were moved from one atoll to another in the Marshall Islands. Most of the 860 persons in the Bikini population now live on Kili Island.

HENCHI BALSIO, Nathan Note and Lore Kessibuki, three of the plaintiffs in the lawsuit, told King they want to return to their homeland, but only if it is safe.

Some 75 persons have moved back to the atoll because of what the witnesses claimed was false information by a doctor with the now-defunct Atomic Energy Commission.

The AEC, in a 1968 report, said people could go back under certain conditions.

A KEY purpose of the court action is to prevent

anyone else from moving permanently to Bikini until completion of further studies. The Energy Research and Development Administration, successor to the AEC, is still studying results of tests made at Bikini in June.

Six former Bikini residents, through attorney George M. Allen of the Micronesian Legal Services Corp., filed their law-

suit Oct. 9. They want King to order an immediate medical examination of the persons who returned to the atoll, risking exposure to radiation. They also want complete radiological tests to be made.

A mass return to Bikini was set for last month. Some 35 houses have been built by the U.S. Government as part of its obliga-

tion to the people. However, the Interior Department announced the atoll was still unsafe.

BALOS TOLD King he is unwilling to take his family there "because it is not safe. Why I take them back to Bikini? I love my family. I don't want my children to have cancer."

Speaking through Marshallese interpreter Austin Jelke, Kessibuki, the magistrate and leader of the Bikini people, described how the major families wish to return.

NOTE, ALSO speaking through Jelke, expressed concern that persons could take ships from one atoll to another and return to Bikini "before the island was safe for them to go to." Plaintiffs want King to order that a warning be posted.

King told attorney Allen he would not consider issuing an order until Nov. 1. There probably will be some meetings between the U.S. Attorney's Office and Allen in the latter part of October.

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