

BIKINI exiles sue U.S. to return

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By GERALD KATO
Advertiser Staff Writer

The people of Bikini atoll, exiled for 30 years while their homeland was being used as a nuclear testing ground, have filed a massive lawsuit against the U.S. Government to secure what they hope will be their final return home.

Attorney George M. Allen of the Micronesian Legal Services Corp. filed the lawsuit on behalf of the people of Bikini in Federal Court here yesterday.

The suit is asking the court to issue an order for immediate medical examination of the 75 persons who have returned to the atoll, risking exposure to radiation. It also seeks a complete radiological survey of the atoll to determine the risks involved to others who may return.

THE PEOPLE of Bikini were removed after World War II when the United States decided to use the 125-acre atoll for an atomic testing ground. About 23 nuclear tests were conducted there between 1946 and 1958.

During that time, the people were moved from one atoll to another in the Marshall Islands. There are now about 860 persons in the Bikini population, most of whom live in Kili.

A return to Bikini had been scheduled in September but the Interior Department announced that the atoll was still unsafe.

THE LAWSUIT names as defendants Robert C. Seamans Jr., administrator, U.S. Energy Research and Development



Advertiser photo by Charles Chamura

Balos (left) and his fellow Bikini Islanders have turned to the courts to expedite their return home.

Administration; William J. Stanley, director, Pacific Area Support Office, U.S. Energy Research and Development Administration; James R. Schlesinger, secretary of defense; and Kent Frizzell, acting secretary of the interior.

Also, Fred M. Zeder, director, Office of Territories; Edward E. Johnston, high commissioner of the Trust Territories; Oscar Debrum, district administrator, Marshall

Islands; and President Ford.

In effect, the suit alleges that the U.S. Government has not kept its promise to return the people of Bikini to their homeland. It seeks court action to move the resettlement program along, with the necessary radiological and environmental surveys to insure that the atoll is safe to live on.

ONE OF THE plaintiffs in the suit, Henchi Balos,

said his people are anxious to return to their homeland but they want to be sure that it's safe to return.

"All these 30 years we were expecting that we would be treated better and yet nothing has been done," he said.

"We were promised by the United States Government as well as the Trust Territories Government that they would provide us everything we needed. They haven't done any-

thing to keep their promises.

"We've been patiently waiting up to now and it seems like nobody cares, so, as a result, we thought by taking action we would be treated better than that."

AMONG THE things being sought in the suit are:

- A bar against anyone going to the atoll unless that person is informed, in the Marshallese language if necessary, of the

possible risks involved.

- Contingency relocation of Bikini residents.

- Immediate medical examinations of all those who now are living on the atoll, requiring the Energy Research and Development Administration to furnish technical assistance and facilities.

- Complete aerial radiological surveys of the Bikini and other northern Marshall atolls to draw conclusions on the risks posed by radiation. This would be part of the compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act.

THE SUIT alleges that the people of Bikini have lost faith in the Atomic Energy Commission and its successor, the Energy Research and Development Administration, which were designated to carry out the radiological tests. The suit says they were misled through with the tests.

The suit is asking that a panel of scientific personnel be appointed to analyze the data from radiological tests of the island.

The court should take control over agency spending and monitor the eventual resettlement of the people, the suit says.

THE COLLAPSE of the Bikini resettlement represents a classic case of bureaucratic dysfunction," the suit said.

"Money is still being spent; meetings are still being held; bureaucrats continue to fly all over the northern hemisphere on government expense accounts, but nothing is being done about the people of Bikini."

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