

United States Department of the Interior

OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20240

410754

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

JUN 19 1975

Dear Mr. Secretary:

Recent developments have caused grave concerns as respects our responsibilities toward the people of the Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands, primarily those of Bikini, Enewetak, Rongelap, Utirik and Rongerik Atolls.

The cleanup of Bikini, in anticipation of the eventual settlement, was a joint effort among the Department of the Interior, Department of Defense, Atomic Energy Commission and the Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands, as set forth in the enclosed August 12, 1968, instructions from President Johnson. As we were proceeding with the construction program the Atomic Energy Commission, in November 1974, informed us of some recent radiological findings that caused us to stop the project. We were told that a sophisticated follow-on survey was highly desirable not only on Bikini but throughout the various nuclear test areas. To that end, Secretary Morton, in his March 7, 1975, letter to you requested logistics support for the Energy Research and Development Administration survey. Unfortunately, in Mr. Clements' May 29, 1975 reply, the Department of Defense could not provide this unless \$609,000 in costs could be reimbursed. The Department of the Interior was unable to identify funds for this, nor could ERDA which was prepared to absorb all other related costs from monies already programmed. Consequently, we are deeply concerned that a quality radiological survey such as that performed on Enewetak, whose people will not be coming back for some time, cannot be made available in a timely fashion for the Bikinians whose return is imminent.

To compound the situation, on June 11 the Marshallese chief, who claims control over the atolls of Rongelap, Utirik and Rongerik, all accidental fallout areas from the 1954 Bravo test on Bikini, visited the Director of Territorial Affairs, claiming loss of use and other damage as a result of this event. He contends that the U.S. Government never presented the people with a briefing of any radiological survey conducted nor to date has told his people that Rongerik is habitable.

It is clear that the U.S. Government has and will continue to have for many years, a long-term responsibility for thorough monitoring of

CONSERVE
AMERICA'S
ENERGY

From LLNL
MLC Records
File = Bikini Agreements
& Actions

9609

Save Energy and You Serve America!

1706

the radiological conditions of the atolls on and around the test sites, as well as the people who were fallout victims. In addition, our commitments to insure the safe return of the Bikinians and the people of Enewetak. It is imperative that they and their environment be attended to with the best testing equipment available.

It appears that none of the involved Departments has budgeted adequately for the needed and highly warranted effort in order to meet our statutory and moral commitments to the people of this area. This has become increasingly clear through staff level dialogs as well as the recent unsuccessful effort to perform the best possible survey on Bikini.

To better assess the problems and to determine exactly what remains to be done and who is responsible for funding and executing all or various segments of future radiological surveys and monitoring, I feel that an interagency meeting is essential. I therefore propose that key personnel from each Department meet at Interior on June 25 at 2:00 PM, whereupon ERDA can set forth its proposed program along with support requirements. If agreement on budgeting and support commitments cannot be reached, we will at least be in a position to present the problem to the Office of Management and Budget and seek further instructions. I am asking that this meeting be coordinated by the Director of Territorial Affairs. Staff contact can be made through Mr. Harry U. Brown at 343-4736.

We believe that the United States commitment under the Trusteeship Agreement requires a strong reaffirmation by all concerned agencies, to work together in carrying out a comprehensive program, not only for Bikini or Enewetak, but all other involved areas in the Trust Territory which were touched by the 10-year testing program.

Sincerely yours,

Rayston C. Hughes
Assistant Secretary of the Interior

Hon. James R. Schlesinger
Secretary of Defense
Washington, D.C. 20301

Enclosure

1707