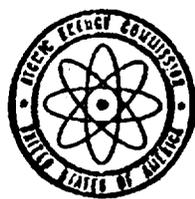


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ATOMIC ENERGY COMMISSION  
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August 1, 1968

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JULY 29 MEMORANDUM FROM MR. HARRIS RE DRAFT WHITE HOUSE ANNOUNCEMENT ON BIKINI AND STATEMENT BY CHAIRMAN SEABORG

SECY:LGH

At Information Meeting 823 on July 31, 1968, the Commission approved the draft memorandum from Secretary Udall to the President regarding return of the Bikini Islanders to their atoll, the draft White House announcement, and the proposed statement for Chairman Seaborg.

The Assistant General Manager and the Division of Public Information are taking the appropriate action.

W. B. McCool  
Secretary

- cc:
- Chairman Seaborg
- Commissioner Ramey
- Commissioner Tape
- Commissioner Johnson
- General Manager
- Deputy General Manager
- Assistant General Manager
- Exec. Asst. to Gen. Mgr.
- Asst. Gen. Mgr. for Admin.
- Asst. Gen. Mgr. for Operations
- Asst. Gen. Mgr. for R&D
- General Counsel

- Director, Biology & Medicine
- Director, Congressional Relations
- Director, Operational Safety
- Director, Public Information

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July 29, 1968

Chairman Seaborg  
Commissioner Ramey  
Commissioner Tape  
Commissioner Johnson  
THRU: *f* General Manager  
Howard C. Brown, Jr.

DRAFT WHITE HOUSE ANNOUNCEMENT ON BIKINI AND STATEMENT BY CHAIRMAN SEABORG

Attached are copies of a draft memo from Secretary Udall to the President concerning return of the Bikini Islanders to their atoll and a draft White House announcement of this action (Tab A). Also attached is a proposed statement by Chairman Seaborg on behalf of the Commission which would be issued after the White House has announced the decision to return the Bikinians (Tab B).

The Department of the Interior hopes to transmit the memorandum to the President this week.

The draft of the Interior Department memo, the proposed White House announcement, and the proposed AEC statement have been reviewed by the Chairman, and by the Office of the Assistant General Manager for Research and Development and the Divisions of Biology and Medicine and Operational Safety.

CONFIRMED TO BE UNCLASSIFIED BY AUTHORITY OF DOE/OC Signed John A. Harris

*H.L. Hoppe* 10-17-85  
REVIEWED BY DATE

*Info. mtg. 8/23* BY: *DICK HOOGLE* 3-4-87 John A. Harris, Director  
Division of Public Information

Attachments:  
Tab A  
Tab B

cc: H. C. Brown, AGM J. R. Totter, BM  
S. G. English, AGMRD M. B. Biles, OS  
W. B. McCool, SECY E. E. Stokely, PI  
R. D. O'Neill, OCR G. Bradshaw, PI

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OFFICE ▶	PI	PI	AGM	EAGM	DGM	GM
SURNAME ▶	IFouchard:pc	JHarris				
DATE ▶	7/29/68					

TAB A

July 25, 1968

Memorandum

To: The President  
From: Secretary of the Interior  
Subject: Return of the Bikini People

In 1946 the United States removed the people of Bikini from their atoll in order to permit it to be used for atomic testing. These people, originally about 150, were ultimately settled on Kili island in the southern Marshalls. They have never adjusted to Kili, which is small and has no lagoon, but have retained an intense desire to return to Bikini.

In early 1967, at my request and that of Trust Territory High Commissioner Norwood, the Atomic Energy Commission made a special survey of the atoll in order to determine whether radiation levels were such as to enable people safely to live on its islands. Following this intensive survey of the atoll and a review by a special committee of consultants, an affirmative conclusion was reached. Attached is a copy of the special committee's report which states that ". . . Bikini Atoll, site of more than 20 nuclear tests between 1946 and 1958, is once again safe for human habitation."

At my request, the Secretary of Defense has pushed ahead with a special study of security requirements in that part of the Pacific and has advised me that return of the people to Bikini is compatible with those requirements. The Defense Department may wish to install some unmanned devices, such as radar towers, and on a limited scale station personnel on the atoll, but these activities will not prevent resettlement by the Bikinians nor be inconsistent with the re-establishment of their normal life on the atoll.

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July 25, 1968

The 1967 AEC survey team undertook an intensive study of the atoll measuring external radiation levels and the radioactivity content of soil, water and plants and of animal life. The last previous survey had been made in 1964 as a part of continuing studies of the atoll since 1946.

The survey team noted that vegetation on the islands of the atoll is dense and that the populations of birds and the marine life of the lagoon were large. However, the coconut trees which are the basis of human life and the economy of coral atolls had been destroyed during the tests. The density of the new vegetation has largely checked their recovery.

The results of the survey have been analyzed by a special committee of consultants. The consultants concluded that:

"The exposures to radiation that would result from repatriation of the Bikini people do not offer a significant threat to their health and safety."

Although the consultants have judged the radiation levels on the atoll now to be acceptable, they made several recommendations for reducing exposure even further. These recommendations include:

- (1) Restrict living areas to the major islands of Eneu (Enyu) and Bikini for the present and cover the village area with a layer of coral rock to reduce further the low level of radiation from the soil;
- (2) Clean out the present population of strontium 90-bearing coconut crabs, which form a part of the diet of Pacific Islanders;
- (3) Remove the radioactive scrap metal which still remains on some of the islands near the test sites; and

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(4) Maintain a continual monitoring of the islands and the population to assure that they do not, in some unforeseen way, accumulate a greater radiation dose than predicted.

The committee of consultants also recommended that resettlement be initiated on Eneu island because of its very low contamination level.

"No radiological precautions will be needed on Eneu," the committee reported.

We would propose to follow the recommendations of the consultants in developing a resettlement program. A copy of their report is attached for your information.

Return of the Bikini people cannot be immediate although we should take immediate steps to begin their return. A comprehensive plan must be developed; any remaining sources of major contamination removed; the overgrowth of uneconomic vegetation cleared; the land planted to productive crops; and new housing and community facilities built. We propose to do this with the active participation of the Bikini people in both the planning and execution stages. It will, however, also require the active cooperation of the Department of Defense, the Atomic Energy Commission and, in seeking funds for the resettlement project, the Bureau of the Budget.

Our tentative time table calls for the High Commissioner within the next few weeks to ask the Bikini people to name a group of their leaders to work in the planning stage. The second step is an on-island survey of the atoll to select those sites required by the Defense Department and to plan the location of the new village. At this stage, it is expected that the preliminary resettlement plan will be drafted with the Bikini leadership participating. The visit to Bikini should take place in the last half of August or in early September. During the fall the plan would be completed and cost estimates presented.

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Depending upon the availability of funds, the initial contingent of returnees might be settled within a year. In the meantime, Bikini workers would be engaged in clearing, planting, and building activities. Return of all of the Bikinians now living on Kili might be accomplished within two years. However, resettlement assistance will be required for a much longer period. The atoll is now virtually devoid of edible or economic plants and a feeding program will be required until subsistence foodcrops reach adequate levels and commercial crops come into production. It takes approximately seven years for newly planted coconuts to become fully productive. The coconut is essential to life on a coral atoll, providing food, drink, building materials, and, equally important, virtually the sole source of cash.

There is attached a draft announcement regarding the proposed resettlement of the Bikini people. Bikini and the desire of the people on Kili to return has recently been in the news and there continues to be widespread interest in these people. For these reasons, I request and urge your public announcement of the decision that the Bikini people can and will be relocated on their home atoll of Bikini.

Secretary of the Interior

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[REDACTED] July 25, 1968

Draft Announcement  
(Second Version)

The President announced today that plans are underway to return the people of Bikini to their home atoll in the Marshall Islands. A special committee of expert consultants has reported to the Atomic Energy Commission that Bikini Atoll, site of more than 20 nuclear tests between 1946 and 1958, is once again safe for human habitation.

The Defense Department has reported after a special study that the return of the people is consistent with security requirements. There will be a continuing requirement for the use of some sites on the atoll and there may be a need for Defense Department personnel to be stationed on the islands from time to time. These uses will not prevent the return of the people nor the re-establishment of their normal way of life.

Bikini Atoll is a ring of 26 coral islands, 25 miles long and 15 miles wide, on the northwestern fringe of the Marshall Islands. Before 1946, when the Bikinians were moved to make way for nuclear tests, about 150 persons lived on the atoll. They moved first to Rongerik Atoll and since 1948 have lived on Kili in the southern Marshall Islands. The Kili population is now about 300 and a total of about 500 people regard Bikini as their traditional home.

Because of the dense overgrowth of the islands and the lack of any substantial quantity of foodstuffs growing on the atoll, an extensive clearing and replanting program will be required. In addition, housing and community facilities, such as a school, dispensary, and a water collection system, will be needed before the Bikinians can return from Kili.

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July 25, 1968

The Bikini people will actively participate in both the planning and the execution stages of the resettlement program. The High Commissioner of the Trust Territory has been asked to request the Bikini people to name a group of their leaders to work with Trust Territory Government personnel and representatives of the United States Government in developing a comprehensive resettlement plan. This work is scheduled to begin with a visit to the atoll within the next few weeks by a team composed of Bikini representatives, and personnel from the Trust Territory Government, the Defense and Interior Departments and the Atomic Energy Commission. It is the intent of the United States and the Trust Territory Government to work with the Bikini people in building a modern and model community on their atoll.

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AEC CHAIRMAN SEABORG ISSUES STATEMENT ON BIKINI

(Dr. Glenn T. Seaborg, Chairman of the U. S. Atomic Energy Commission, today issued the following statement on AEC's role in the decision to allow the former residents of Bikini to return to their atoll.)

It has been greatly satisfying to my fellow Commissioners and me to take part in the decision, announced today by President Johnson, to return the Bikinians to their atoll. The attached AEC report on the radiation survey of Bikini was a cornerstone of that decision.

The report, which declares the atoll once again safe for human habitation, represents the work of many highly qualified men, including the scientific team which surveyed the islands in 1967 and the special consultant committee of experts who produced the report.

It has been just over 10 years since the last nuclear test took place at Bikini on July 22, 1958. The intervening years have brought a remarkable recovery on the islands, as AEC sponsored research teams noted in both 1964 and 1967.

The 1967 survey was made at the request of the Secretary of the Interior whose department is responsible for the welfare of the Bikini natives. The Bikinians were moved from their atoll in 1946 before the first nuclear test took place.

The team which visited the atoll in 1967 included radiological and health physicists, marine biologists, a tropical

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agriculturalist, an anthropologist and representatives of the Pacific Islands Trust Territories, Department of the Interior.

Eight of the most highly qualified experts available were asked to review the survey material. After meeting with members of the survey team and examining their reports, these consultants reached the unanimous conclusion that it would be radiologically safe to allow the Bikini people to return to their home atoll. Their report was forwarded to the Secretary of the Interior earlier this month.

While Bikini is best known as a weapons testing site, it has also contributed significantly to man's knowledge of the long term effects of radiation on an environment.

During the years when radiation levels were too high for people to live there permanently, the AEC sponsored several scientific studies on the atoll. In fact, Bikini truly served as a living ecological laboratory.

Before it was either a proving ground or laboratory, though, Bikini was a home land. Having been closely associated with nuclear energy, and Bikini, for all these years, I find it particularly gratifying now to take part in the atoll's return to usefulness as a home for the Bikinian people.

Copies of the technical data from <sup>the</sup>~~that~~ survey are available for examination at the Public Document Room in AEC's Washington office at 1717 H Street.

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