

US DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

EG 326

Collection L. Joe Deal

Box 13

Folder Marshall Islands

STATEMENT OF UNDERSTANDING

ON THE PART OF THE

GOVERNMENT OF THE UNITED STATES

AND THE GOVERNMENT OF THE TRUST TERRITORY OF THE PACIFIC ISLANDS

CONCERNING THE

MOVE OF THE PEOPLE OF BIKINI ISLAND, AUGUST, 1978

1. On August 11, 1978, the Undersecretary of the Department of the  
 2. Interior, James A. Joseph, the Deputy Undersecretary, Wallace Green, and  
 3. the Director of the Office of Territorial Affairs, Ruth G. Van Cleve,  
 4. journeyed to Bikini Island to meet with its current residents. The purpose  
 5. of their meeting was to convey information on the subject of the forthcoming  
 6. move by the people of Bikini Island to Kili Island, and to respond to ques-  
 7. tions and hear concerns put to them by the people of Bikini Island. They  
 8. had earlier, on August 7, held a similar meeting with former residents of  
 9. Bikini who now reside on Kili. The High Commissioner of the Trust Territory  
 10. of the Pacific Islands, Adrian P. Winkel, had been prevented by bad weather  
 11. in Saipan from joining in the visit to Bikini Island, but he had earlier met  
 12. with the people of Bikini, as well as with other Bikinians on Kili.

14. In 1946, the people of Bikini were removed from their atoll by the  
 15. U. S. Navy in order to enable the United States to use the atoll for a  
 16. nuclear testing program which lasted until 1958. The islanders were moved  
 17. first to Rongerik, then to Kwajalein, and ultimately to Kili. In the late  
 18. 1960's, it appeared that levels of radiation on Bikini atoll were such that  
 19. the people could return to and use a number of the major islands of the atoll.  
 20. Beginning in 1969, a clean-up of the atoll and a rehabilitation program was  
 21. begun. In the early 1970's, some Bikini people were employed in the project  
 22. and the Bikini Island population increased to approximately 140 in 1978. In  
 23. 1977, the intake of radionuclides by the people living on Bikini Island had  
 24. increased to alarming proportions, and a major feeding program was insti-  
 25. tuted. April, 1978 surveys showed that the feeding program had not resulted



1. in a decrease in the radionuclide body burden. The Department of the  
2. Interior decided, in the light of the evidence presented by the Department  
3. of Energy, that the people living on Bikini should be moved at the earliest  
4. possible date. An aerial/radiological survey currently underway and other  
5. radiological tests on Bikini being conducted by the Department of Energy  
6. will determine whether Bikini atoll can, in the foreseeable future, be  
7. considered as a home for the Bikini people.

8.

9. Among the requests of the people of both Bikini and Kili was a  
10. request for a statement in writing of the understandings that the repre-  
11. sentatives of the United States conveyed during those meetings and of the  
12. commitments that those representatives were willing to make. The follow-  
13. ing are intended to respond to the principal concerns then and there  
14. expressed.\*

15.

16. Mr. Joseph and Mrs. Van Cleve, on behalf of the Government of the  
17. United States, and Mr. Winkel, on behalf of the Government of the Trust  
18. Territory, offered the following assurances:

19.

20. 1. The Government of the United States considers itself generally  
21. responsible for the well being of the Bikini people and their descendents  
22. and, following consultation with them, the Government of the United States  
23. will seek to arrange their relocation, permanently, in the most satisfactory  
24. manner possible. The Department of the Interior will undertake to obtain  
25. such authority and such resources as may be required in order to meet and

On August 14, 1978, soon after the Bikini and Kili meetings, the four officers referred to above were involved in a major airplane accident off the coast of Guam. Although they were among the survivors, their notes taken at the meetings sunk with the airplane. This statement, drafted by Mrs. Van Cleve on August 15 at the Guam Naval Hospital is intended to be as full as recollections permit, but in the circumstances it may not be complete.

1. discharge this responsibility. The Department of the Interior will call upon  
2. other agencies of the United States Government to assist it, particularly the  
3. Department of Energy, so as to assure that, among other things, the medical  
4. needs of the current residents of Bikini Island continue to be met.

5.  
6.       11. Because Kili Island has, until recent weeks, been regarded as  
7. solely a temporary relocation site for the people of Bikini, the Governments  
8. have never undertaken to construct permanent facilities there, nor to improve  
9. significantly any of the existing Kili facilities. It is now known that  
10. Bikini Island will not be fit for human habitation for decades to come, and  
11. on the basis of the most recent scientific information, it appears that Eneu  
12. Island, in the Bikini Atoll, will also be unavailable for settlement. In  
13. the circumstances, the Governments understand that some of the Bikini people  
14. will choose to remain on Kili indefinitely, and the Governments will accord-  
15. ingly undertake a program for the permanent rehabilitation of Kili.

16.  
17.       III. It is not yet possible to develop a permanent relocation plan  
18. for the people of Bikini. That plan must await completion of the aerial/  
19. radiological survey that is now underway, and that is expected to be com-  
20. pleted no later than the early weeks of 1979. When those survey results  
21. are available and evaluated, and when any remaining scientific tests found  
22. necessary are also completed, all of which developments are expected to  
23. occur in the first months of 1979, it will be possible to identify safe  
24. relocation sites. The Governments will then, following full consultation  
25. with the people of Kili (including the current residents of Bikini Island  
26. who will by then have relocated there), plan in detail for the relocation  
27. of such Kili residents as choose to move elsewhere, affording to them a  
28. choice among the possible relocation sites. Those who choose to remain on  
29. Kili will be accommodated there.

30.

**DOE ARCHIVES**

1. IV. The Governments understand that many, and possibly all, of the  
2. current residents of Bikini Island would prefer, because they cannot remain  
3. on Bikini, to live on Enou Island in the Bikini Atoll. Although the best  
4. current information suggests that that will not be possible, if later  
5. tests should show Enou can be safely inhabited, the Governments pledge that  
6. all Bikinians who choose to do so may move to Enou, to the full extent that  
7. the size and resources of Enou permit.

9. V. In the meantime the Governments have constructed twenty-eight  
10. temporary houses on Kili, one each for each family now residing on Bikini  
11. Island. This construction is expected to be completed either by the day  
12. on which the Bikini Island residents return to Kili, or within a few days  
13. thereafter, depending upon weather conditions on Kili in the last half of  
14. August, 1978. Because a visit to Kili reveals that certain necessary  
15. community facilities there are either seriously inadequate or nonexistent,  
16. the Governments will undertake forthwith the construction of certain temporary  
17. facilities: a new dispensary, a new school, an addition to the church, and  
18. an addition to the civic assembly building. These facilities, which are  
19. expected to be completed by the fall of 1978, will be of temporary con-  
20. struction because they can thereby be erected with great speed, and because  
21. the need for them should not be left unmet during the several months during  
22. which permanent facilities are planned and constructed. Such permanent  
23. facilities will be provided as a part of the rehabilitation of Kili referred  
24. to in assurance number II.

26. VI. The Governments recognize the necessity of providing a dock at  
27. Kili. They will commence immediately to cause the engineering feasibility  
28. of such a dock to be explored, and assuming both engineering feasibility  
29. and the availability of the necessary funds, neither of which is expected  
30. to pose a problem, the construction of a dock at Kili is expected to begin

1. in the spring of 1979.

2.  
3. VII. The Governments recognize that the island of Bikini and the  
4. Bikini Atoll are places of unique importance to the people of Bikini and  
5. their descendents, and that it is therefore important to them to be able  
6. to view and visit Bikini, even if only briefly. The Government of the  
7. Trust Territory will therefore arrange, when Trust Territory shipping  
8. schedules permit, to transport Bikini Residents living on Kili (including  
9. the current Bikini Island residents about to move there) for visits from  
10. time to time to Bikini. Such visits will necessarily be brief, and it  
11. will not be possible for the Bikini visitors to reside, even briefly, on  
12. Bikini Island nor, probably, on Eneu Island. Such brief visits will,  
13. however, occur from time to time, as shipping schedules reasonably permit  
14. and as the wishes of the Bikinians indicate.

15.  
16. VIII. The Governments recognize that the current residents of  
17. Bikini Island will encounter personal hardships, as well as certain  
18. expenses, attendant upon their forthcoming move. The Governments will  
19. therefore, pay, as a lump sum relocation allowance, the sum of \$100.72  
20. per person, to the head of each family on Bikini Island. That sum is  
21. not intended to constitute compensation, in whole or in part, for any  
22. damage the Bikini Island residents may be found to have sustained. It  
23. is intended instead to be a one-time payment to facilitate their forth-  
24. coming move to Kili Island. The Government of the United States has  
25. arranged for the current Bikini Island residents to stop at Kwajalein,  
26. while enroute to Kili, to make purchases there.

27.  
28. The foregoing guidelines and provisions are not intended to  
29. be exhaustive. They are intended to respond to the major concerns ex-  
30. pressed at the meeting on Bikini and Kili on August 11 and 7, 1978.

DOE ARCHIVES

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James G. Joseph  
Undersecretary of the Interior  
Per APW

Ruth S. Van Ness  
Director, Office of Territorial Affairs  
Per APW

Adrian P. Wink  
High Commissioner, Trust Territory of  
the Pacific Islands

Dated: August 16, 1978