

DRAFT  
TFM:OES:nr  
7/31/78

ACTION MEMORANDUM

TO: Deputy Secretary  
THRU: Under Secretary  
FROM: Acting Assistant Secretary for Environment  
SUBJECT: RADIOLOGICAL SURVEY, NORTHERN MARSHALL ISLANDS

Issue

How to fund technical costs for the radiological survey of the Northern Marshall Islands.

Background

The U.S. nuclear weapons testing program conducted from 1946 to 1958 in the Pacific left long-term radiological contamination and health problems. Fallout from these tests has touched many islands in the Northern Marshalls, although Bikini and Enewetak Atolls, where the testing was conducted, were the most severely affected. The radiological conditions of these two atolls, consequently, have been important issues in both the administration of the U.S. trusteeship of these islands as well as in formal U.S. Micronesian Status Negotiations. This importance was demonstrated when National level decisions were reached in 1968 and 1972, respectively, to rehabilitate Bikini and Enewetak. Comprehensive radiological surveys had not been conducted for either atoll prior to these decisions, although an extensive radiological survey of Enewetak was completed in early 1973. At the Federal level there is an interagency cooperative effort to deal with radiological and related health problems in the Marshalls with Department of Defense (DOD) performing cleanup, the Department of the Interior (DOI) performing rehabilitation, and the Department of Energy (DOE) providing radiological surveys, support for cleanup, and radiological followup of people and their environment.

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Following cleanup of Bikini Atoll in 1969 by DOD, and construction of housing and agricultural rehabilitation by DOI, Bikini people began to return to their island. Recommendations for this return had been qualified with certain restriction against use of local foods grown on Bikini Island. Followup monitoring of the people has indicated these restrictions have not been followed and resulting radiation exposures are seen as unacceptable for continuing the resettlement effort. Therefore, in July 1978, DOI made the decision to transport these residents to Kili Island, where they had lived previously, and to defer resettlement awaiting additional information and advice from DOE.

A lawsuit, THE PEOPLE OF BIKINI, ET AL VS. SEAMANS, ET AL, CIVIL NO. 75-348 U.S.D.C., D. Hawaii, alleges that the U.S. Government has not assessed properly the radiological conditions at Bikini and among other things, requests the court to order an aerial survey for Bikini comparable to that conducted as a part of the radiological survey of Enewetak. During negotiations with the Department of Justice, the plaintiffs' legal counsel determined that various surveys and evaluations of radiological conditions at Bikini Atoll are not as comprehensive as the analysis made of Enewetak Atoll, and seeks as a condition for dropping the suit, a more comprehensive radiological survey of Bikini.

Recognizing the fact that other islands and atolls in the Northern Marshall Islands were significantly affected by fallout from the tests at Bikini and Enewetak, the counsel for the plaintiffs also conditioned dropping the suit on extending the Bikini aerial survey to ten other atolls and two single islands. Since DOE would be responsible for conducting such a survey, the ASEV has taken the initiative to plan not only the aerial survey but a terrestrial and marine survey sufficient to gather data for determining both present radiological conditions on the islands and future predictions of radiological doses to the people living there.

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Under the ASEV, the Division of Operational and Environmental Safety (OES) will manage this survey, as well as act as the focal point of coordination with DOI and other Washington level Federal agencies. The logistics coordination for the survey field operations has been assigned to the Manager, Nevada Operations Office, who will be responsible for operational control and management of the field operations and for direction of support activities. Technical direction of the aerial, terrestrial, and marine field operations and laboratory analysis and dose assessments will be provided by a Technical Director from the Lawrence Livermore Laboratory (LLL) who will have full authority to develop the technical plan. This plan calls for final environmental assessment reports to be available near the end of calendar year 1980.

In Hearings before the House Committee on Appropriations, Department of the Interior, April 3, 1978, Chairman Yates expressed concern to Dr. Schlesinger over the lack of appropriate funding for the survey by the various agencies involved and the lack of progress in performing the survey. Mr. Yates was informed that the funding problems were being resolved and that the program would be carried out.

The Office of Micronesian Status Negotiations has assembled a Federal agency task force in which DOE along with DOD and DOI is a lead agency for compiling the requested information and assisting in the preparation of the U.S. position on compensation prior to the termination of the Trust Territory Agreement in 1981.

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Alternatives

Option A: Reprogram funds within DOE.

- pro: 1. No additional funds will be required in DOE.  
2. This is the easiest and most direct manner to fund administratively.  
3. It recognizes DOE's responsibility for funding the technical costs of the survey.
- con: 1. Funding plans for other DOE programs are already firm.  
2. This may seriously impact other DOE programs.

Option B: Obtain funds through Senate Appropriations Committee markup.

- pro: 1. This would achieve fast action.  
2. This would provide additional funds to DOE.  
3. The survey program would have increased visibility.
- con: 1. The Congressional debates over energy policy may overshadow this issue.

Option C: Put in a budget amendment for the funds and request fast action.

- pro: 1. This would provide additional funds to DOE.  
2. The survey program would have increased visibility.
- con: 1. This method could be time consuming.

Discussion

The purpose of the Northern Marshall Islands survey is to provide documentation of the remaining radioactivity from nuclear testing in the Marshalls and to provide assessment of possible impact on people and their environment.

The objectives are:

1. To obtain aerial photos and aerial radiological maps of the Northern Marshall Atolls, and Islands,
2. To obtain samples of soil, water, plant life and food, adjacent marine waters, and marine and terrestrial life,
3. To process, analyze, and determine the radioactivity content of collected environmental samples, and,

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4. To prepare a report which will present the findings of the survey and an assessment of the radiation doses to people who may live on the surveyed atolls and islands.

Results of assessments of radiological conditions in the Marshalls will provide input that is urgently needed for negotiations relative to termination of <sup>the</sup> United Nations Trust Agreement which are to begin this fall, and for use with any future claims for damage and injury. Progress in the planning and conduct of this survey are being closely followed by Chairman Yates and members of <sup>the</sup> <sup>Appropriations</sup> House Subcommittee on Interior and Insular Affairs.

Although the U.N. Trust Territory Agreement with the U.S. is expected to end soon, it is clear that the U.S. will continue to have a vital national interest in the Northern Marshalls. Resettlement of Bikini Island has suffered a setback due to radiation exposures significantly exceeding acceptable standards. The conditional nature under which Enewetak will be resettled, and the need to continue following the health of people affected by fallout will require radiological monitoring of these people and their environment for the foreseeable future. The survey will be a major part of a standardized data base and will provide information needed for evaluating any future claims for damage or injury. It will contribute to the future monitoring program planned for the Northern Marshall Islands.

In addition to Enewetak and Bikini, there are twelve other atolls or single islands that received intermediate range fallout from one or more of the megaton range tests. A number of these atolls are presently inhabited while others are used for food collection. During nuclear test operations and subsequent survey visits, there was limited monitoring of many of these islands that provided only isolated data points. The coverage was orders of magnitude less than can be obtained with the current technology and instrumentation. In addition, there are little or no data on possible plutonium contamination outside of Bikini and Enewetak Atolls, and insufficient information to

evaluate intake of fission product radionuclides in the food chain. The people of Bikini feel they have been short-changed because the U.S. conducted a highly visible extensive radiological survey of Enewetak. The Bikini portion of the survey, coupled with the previous ground surveys, will go a long way toward making the Bikini data base comparable to that of Enewetak.

The merits of the survey have been thoroughly discussed at staff levels between DOI, DOD, and DOE both before and after the initiation of the lawsuit by the Bikini people. Briefings on the survey were provided to the Administrator of ERDA, the Assistant Secretary of Defense (Health and Environment), the Department of the Interior, Office of Trust Territories, staff members of OMB, and the Chairman of the CEQ.

For 3 years efforts to obtain logistics support from DOD were not successful. OMB was briefed on the survey in March 1976. They subsequently directed the survey be done, and that DOI put \$2.4 million into a FY 1978 supplemental to reimburse DOD/DON for logistics costs based upon the then current Navy cost estimate. After Congress appropriated \$2.4 million, DON increased its cost estimate thereby delaying detailed planning until the additional funding was assured and the actual time of the survey could be determined.

Logistic support for the DOE survey will be provided by the Department of the Navy (DON), reimbursed by funds appropriated to DOI. This support consists of a ship with a helicopter platform and two helicopters. Funding for this support totals \$6.953 million, which has been favorably reported as a FY 1979 appropriation by the House Appropriations Committee. Congressional pressure has resulted in DON assigning a high priority for readying the support ship and an aircraft to perform a photo mission. The photo mission began July 26, 1978. The radiological survey is scheduled to begin September 10, 1978.

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In December 1976 OMB also directed ERDA to absorb the technical cost, then estimated at \$1.2 million, through passback of FY 1978 dollars. Current technical costs are estimated at \$570 in FY 78, \$3.9M in FY 79, and \$550K in FY 80.

The technical costs are split into two categories:

1. Funding for field operations.
2. Funding for laboratory analysis and dose assessments.

Tab A presents a listing of these technical costs for both categories.

Recommendation

That Option C be approved.

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TAB A

RADIOLOGICAL SURVEY OF THE NORTHERN MARSHALLS

Technical Costs - \$ X 1000

	<u>FY 1978</u>	<u>FY 1979</u>	<u>FY 1980</u>
Field Operations	<u>570</u>	<u>900</u>	<u>0</u>
Photo (EG&G)	350	425	0
Aerial (EG&G)			
Ground (LLL)	150	350	0
Contingency & Misc. (NV)	70	125	
Analysis & Assessment	<u>0</u>	<u>3000</u>	<u>550</u>
Sample Processing	0	2800	-
Dose Assessment	0	200	-

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