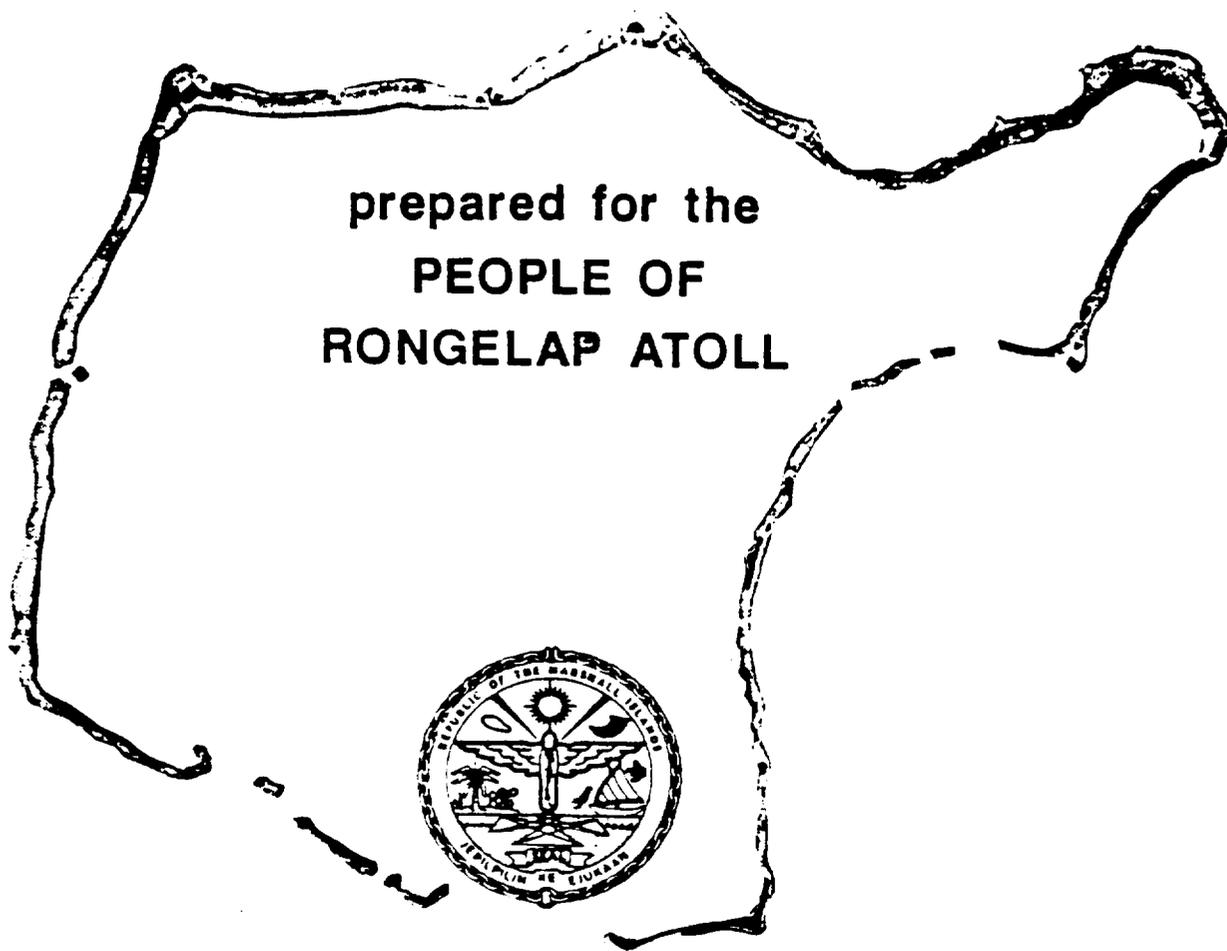


**PRELIMINARY PLAN**  
**for the**  
**REHABILITATION AND RESETTLEMENT**  
**of**  
**RONGELAP ATOLL**



prepared by



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## SECTION II

### INTRODUCTION

#### A. HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Between 1946 and 1958, the Government of the United States of America conducted numerous tests of thermonuclear devices at Enewetak and Bikini Atolls in the Marshall Islands. On March 1, 1954, the largest thermonuclear device tested at Bikini Atoll was detonated. This particular event was given the name Bravo, and was one of 23 nuclear detonations which took place at Bikini Atoll. Just prior to the detonation of Bravo, the predominant winds shifted from their usual northeasterly direction to a westerly direction. As a result of this wind shift, radioactive particles were carried over Ailinginae, Rongelap, Rongerik, Utirik and other atolls east of Bikini. The residual radiation levels at Rongelap Atoll were deemed unacceptable shortly after the Bravo event, and the Rongelapese were evacuated from their Atoll to Kwajalein Atoll.

The U. S. Atomic Energy Commission (AEC) directed H&N in April 1954 to prepare plans and cost estimates for construction of a temporary village for the Rongelapese. This village was constructed on the Island of Ejit in Majuro Atoll. Construction of the village was completed and many of the Rongelap people were moved from Kwajalein to Ejit in June 1954. Several Rongelap people were living away from their Atoll at the time of the fallout. Many of these people also moved to the temporary village on Ejit.

Shortly after the Rongelap people were evacuated from their Atoll, the AEC and other governmental agencies began planning for the return of these people to Rongelap Atoll. This would occur as soon as the residual radioactivity level was judged acceptable from a health point of view. Between June 1954 and June 1956, radiological surveys were conducted at Rongelap Atoll by AEC representatives. In June 1956, the AEC authorized H&N to make necessary surveys, report on existing facilities, and to prepare preliminary plans for rebuilding the Rongelap villages.

The radiological survey of Rongelap and adjacent atolls was completed in November 1956. From this data, the AEC would base its decision as to whether or not it would be safe for the Rongelap people to return to their Atoll. On February 27, 1957, the AEC, with the concurrence of the High Commissioner of the Trust Territories, announced it was safe for the Rongelap people to return to their homeland. With this decision, the repatriation program for the Rongelap people was implemented.

Following a brief village construction period of about three months, 250 Rongelapese from Ejit Island on Majuro Atoll and Ebeye Island on Kwajalein Atoll were transported aboard a U.S. Navy ship to Rongelap Atoll. They arrived the morning of June 29, 1957 - almost 40 months after the forced evacuation from their homeland.

Although the Rongelap people were once again living on their Atoll, the extent to which radiation exposure had affected their lives was still unclear. Thus, from 1957 to 1985, the United States monitored the radiation levels at various islands on Rongelap Atoll, and provided medical monitoring of the Rongelapese.

In May 1985, the International Environmental Organization, Greenpeace, agreed with the Rongelap people that their Atoll may not be safe for human habitation. This was substantiated by the high incidence of thyroid tumors and other medical disorders which are often linked with radiation exposure. This time, 295 Rongelapese once again left their Atoll, with the assistance of Greenpeace, and settled on several islands in the Marshall Islands. Today their primary island of residence is Mejetto at the extreme northwest corner of Kwajalein Atoll.

It is the wish of the Rongelap people to return to their Atoll in the near future. Unfortunately, existing physical and radiological conditions at Rongelap Atoll do not offer the Rongelapese a safe place to live. The concepts presented within this document express the wishes and needs of the Rongelap people, and can be considered absolutely essential if they are to permanently return to their homeland.

#### B. PROGRAM OVERVIEW

The Bravo event at Bikini Atoll on March 1, 1954 changed the lifestyle of the Rongelap people like no other natural or manmade event in their history. Their islands have been contaminated for several future generations yet to come. However, radiological rehabilitation of Enewetak Atoll and ongoing radiological experiments at Bikini Atoll suggest it is possible to rehabilitate Rongelap Atoll to the point of being safe again for human habitation. It is the request of the Rongelap people that a program be implemented with two primary objectives: (1) rehabilitation of all islands having significant contributions to the

survival of the Rongelap people, including islands at nearby Ailinginae and Rongerik Atolls; and (2) construction of new facilities and housing at Rongelap Atoll for use by the Rongelap people.

In conceptual terms, this document presents a preliminary plan for rehabilitating and resettling Rongelap Atoll. Discussions with members of the Rongelap Planning Board have resulted in the definition of work needed at Rongelap Atoll if it is to become a permanent home for the Rongelap people. This work includes the following objectives:

1. Implementation of an independent radiological survey of all islands at Rongelap, Ailinginae, and Rongerik Atolls. This will be performed by an experienced group of radiological scientists selected by the Rongelap people. The purpose of this survey will be to obtain more specific data regarding the radiological condition of Rongelap, Ailinginae, and Rongerik Atolls by using similar methods of radiological testing currently being performed at Bikini, Ailinginae, and Rongelap Atolls by scientists from LLNL and the Bikini Atoll Rehabilitation Committee (BARC). Once the radiological conditions are clearly defined, the recommended means for rehabilitating all islands at Rongelap, Ailinginae, and Rongerik Atolls can be implemented. Prior to beginning the radiological survey, a number of tasks must be performed to improve working conditions at the Atoll. This work

will include pest control, improvement of the existing airstrip to allow air travel to the Atoll, and improvement of island roads to enhance travel on Rongelap, Jabwaan, and Eneaetok Islands. In addition, a facility will be needed to house the scientists and engineers who will travel to Rongelap Atoll during the radiological survey period.

2. Preliminary work at Rongelap Atoll. This work must be performed prior to any other work at the Atoll as it will enhance the rehabilitation and resettlement efforts. Included will be construction of a permanent construction camp, wato surveys, and a number of technical studies needed prior to any detailed design.
  
3. Residential and community center development. New facilities and housing will be constructed at the three traditional village sites on Rongelap, Jabwaan, and Eneaetok Islands of Rongelap Atoll. In addition, public works facilities and transportation facilities will be improved or added to the primary island of residence, Rongelap. More specifically, new construction will include:
  - a. Residential Development for 100 Families, Medical Personnel, and School Teachers,

- b. School/Council Hall,
- c. Medical Clinic/Dispensary,
- d. Recreation Center,
- e. Medium-Size Warehouses,
- f. Guest House,
- g. Water, Power, and Fuel Facilities,
- h. Medium-Draft Dock,
- i. Port Control/Communications Building,
- j. Landfill Area,
- k. Airport Control Building,
- l. Airport Runway Improvement, and
- m. Island Road Improvement.

4. Inter-Atoll and Intra-Atoll transportation. The Rongelap people frequently travel to nearby Ailinginae and Rongerik Atolls and other islands within their own Atoll. They have requested that a 50-foot inter-atoll ocean vessel, and outer-island shelters at Rongelap Atoll islands be provided to assist them in these travels.