



Office of the President
REPUBLIC OF THE MARSHALL ISLANDS

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December 7, 1989

PASO	I	F	DATE
BRAND			
ADM			
M.I.	✓	✓	12/12
SEC		✓	
S. REP			
H&N <i>HMC</i>		✓	
<i>Linda Smith</i>		✓	
<i>Harry Brown</i>		✓	

Admiral Hunting Hardisty
Commander in Chief, United States Pacific Command
Camp H. M. Smith, Hawaii 96861-5025

Dear Admiral Hardisty:

I am writing to request your assistance in arranging for the Defense Nuclear Agency to complete the cleanup of Runit Island at Enewetak Atoll. Enewetak Atoll was one of two major test facilities in the Marshall Islands utilized by the United States Government in the 1940's and 1950's for testing nuclear weapons. It is my understanding that the soil in one area of Runit Island remains dangerously contaminated with the radioactive element plutonium. The contamination is at such a level that officials of the United States Department of Energy have advised residents of Enewetak Atoll that Runit Island must remain off-limits into the indefinite future. Recently, however, it has come to my attention that an effective mining technology has been developed by the Defense Nuclear Agency for extracting plutonium from soil and that such a technology is now being used at Johnston Atoll, which, like Runit Island, was contaminated with plutonium during the course of testing nuclear weapons. It is the request of my government that, once the cleanup has concluded at Johnston Atoll, the plutonium mining plant be reassembled at Runit Island and that the decontamination of that island be completed.

During a three-year period (1977-1980), the Defense Nuclear Agency undertook a massive cleanup of Enewetak Atoll. The operation involved the removal of large quantities of soil from five different islands within the atoll. Wherever the plutonium content of the soil exceeded safety guidelines, the soil was relocated to a waste disposal site. Unfortunately, a portion of Runit Island was left untreated. I understand that the Defense Nuclear Agency had intended to decontaminate this area but was prevented from doing so by either a shortfall of funding or the redeployment of United States Armed Forces personnel assigned to the project.

As a consequence of the cleanup having been left incomplete, this major island in Enewetak Atoll remains uninhabitable. Several years ago, the people of Enewetak resumed residence at islands in the southern half of Enewetak Atoll. They are currently considering resettling Enjebi Island in the

*John Rudolph's Files
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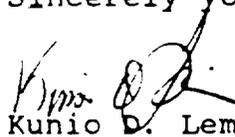


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northern portion of the atoll and the United States Government has provided a trust fund to finance the resettlement and replanting of Enjebi Island. According to United States Department of Energy reports, Runit Island remains the only major island that had traditionally served as the residence of Enewetakese people and that is still uninhabitable. I ask you to make arrangements with the Defense Nuclear Agency to restore the island to habitability.

I would further note that the waste disposal site for plutonium-contaminated soil from throughout Enewetak Atoll is located on Runit Island. The contaminated soil was deposited in a bomb crater and covered by a concrete dome. The waste disposal site is safely shielded and is regularly monitored by the Department of Energy. This area would have to remain a radiological control area and should be fenced-in before Runit Island is resettled or used for the cultivation of food crops. I am informed that Runit Island remains off-limits to the Enewetakese, not because of the disposal site, but because the Defense Nuclear Agency did not quite finish its cleanup job ten years ago. Now that an effective technology has been found to remove plutonium from the soil of coral atolls, I request that the cleanup be completed at Runit in the near future. The people of the Marshall Islands shall be most grateful for your help in conveying this request to the Defense Nuclear Agency.

Sincerely yours,


Kunio D. Lemari
Acting President

cc: U.S. Representative Samuel B. Thomsen
Senator Ishmael John
Mayor Naptali Peter