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Department of Energy

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TRIP TO ENEWETAK, BIKINI, AND MALOELAP ATOLLS

I. BACKGROUND

Los Alamos National Laboratory requested PASO's assistance in accessing and making arrangements with the Maloelap Atoll leadership and community for the use of real estate and facilities there in connection with a scientific experiment scheduled in August and/or September, 1990. I accompanied a five-person LANL team to Majuro and Maloelap to facilitate this arrangement. While in the Marshall Islands over the weekend, I also accompanied, as requested, Kathy Johnson, a USC House Appropriations Committee staffer, to Enewetak and Bikini, in order to brief her on our activities at both places.

II. DATES

A. Majuro, January 19-21, 1990

- 1/20 - Daytrip to Enewetak & Bikini
- 1/21 - Afternoon trip to Maloelap

III. ACTIVITIES AND OBSERVATIONS

A. Enewetak and Bikini

My principal interest in accompanying Kathy Johnson to Enewetak was to brief her on the Resettlement Program and progress made-to-date in preparing local staff to assume responsibility for the program in FY 1991. It is still DOE's fond desire to terminate our role for the Interior Department at Enewetak by September 30, 1990, as I tirelessly emphasized to Ms. Johnson. I stressed that our training program appeared to be successful (pending our intended assessment of it scheduled for mid-February) and that the Enewetakese and other Marshallese staff were as ready as they will ever be to take over the Field Station and program responsibilities. She seemed pleased to know this.

While at Enewetak, Ms. Johnson toured the Field Station and later met in a closed-door session with the Enewetak Council. Afterwards, I asked her what had transpired there. She answered somewhat elliptically, "DOE, DOE, DOE forever!", which I took to mean that the Council requested that DOE

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remain in place to operate the Resettlement Program in FY 1991 (and presumably thereafter). Note: I learned later that I was wrong; it wasn't the Council but its lawyer who asked Ms. Johnson after the meeting if DOE couldn't be persuaded to remain another year at Enewetak.

The LANL scientific party also toured the field stations at both Enewetak and Bikini. They identified a location at Bikini where they intend to mount their experiment in support of the August missile launch from Kwajalein.

B. MAJURO

I took advantage of the opportunity while in Majuro to conduct collateral business.

I met with Judge Bruce Piggott of the Nuclear Claims Tribunal to present him with additional data sent to us by Dr. Byron Ristvet of DNA, pertaining to real estate lost during Bikini testing. With the exception of photographs still to be sent to us by DNA, this data "closes the book" with respect to research information we have promised and provided to the NTC over the past year, as I underscored to Judge Piggott. He was very thankful for the information and expressed his appreciation to us.

He presented me with a copy of the NTC's annual report and shared with me its achievements and concerns. For one, there is continued pressure from local elected leaders and officials to influence the direction and thrust of the tribunal, by both legislation and innuendo. The NTC is definitely on the defensive. Thus, it is not surprising that it took DOE's list of thirteen medical effects of radiation, and expanded it to include twenty-three classes of medical damages. Moreover, claims for personal injury from US nuclear testing will be allowed (and paid!) from any Marshallese residing on any atoll/island in the Marshalls. The work of the Radiation Panel (an eminent group of scientific consultants to the RepMar Government) to re-characterize the presence and degree of radiation throughout the Marshall Islands is being undertaken for the sole purpose of providing data so that the NTC judges can determine the validity and worth of property damage only from nuclear testing!

I also met with the new doctor and staff of the 177 Health Plan. Dr. Berysin Solomon, a Pingelapese Islander from Pohnpei, FSM, with Enewetakese antecedents, was hired as the lead physician. We discussed the upcoming Spring medical mission to which 177 has been invited by us to participate. He will advise us within a week if (and whom) shall attend our mission.

I met briefly with both Senator John of Enewetak, and Peter Oliver of RepMar to discuss the Resettlement program and training, as well as the trip of the Enewetak Council to LLNL and NTS in February. Incidentally, Oliver reported that RepMar is working closely with Ambassador Thomsen in pursuing the FY 1992 plutonium cleanup of Runit Island at Enewetak. There appears to be keen interest in the project at all levels to date.

C. Maleolap Atoll

A LANL party, headed by Dr. Robert Brownlee, and I, along with DOE representative/translator, Reynold De Brum proceeded by small aircraft to Tarawa Island in Maloelap Atoll (not to be confused with the infamous World War II battleground in the Kiribati Islands, six-hundred miles to the south) to meet with the community. Tarawa Island at Maloelap was the site of a 15,000 person, Japanese air base which was bombed and bypassed during the Pacific War. The Marshallese simply reoccupied the damaged Japanese buildings and facilities and live there today. One sees interesting war relics all over the jungle and along the beaches: Mitsubishi Zeros, "Betty-bombers", ack-ack guns, four-inch shore batteries, and the like, all rusted and deteriorated.

At any rate, the LANL party had pre-selected Maloelap as the ideal site to emplace a radio receiver to be used in conjunction with a missile test from Kwajalein Atoll to the Northwest, in August or September of 1990. They asked our help to facilitate this arrangement. High chief ("Iroi") Rimios Hermios, along with Mayor Ina Lamae, listened to our proposal with great interest, and declared on the spot that DOE (i.e. LANL) had permission to come to Maloelap in August to set-up and conduct the experiment. One question was asked by a U.S. Peace Corps Volunteer assigned to the atoll: she wondered if the island and people could be harmed in any way by the fallout and dispersion of the barium cloud to be released by the rocket and analyzed by radiowaves. The scientists assured her the cloud would have no effect on (or would even be near) Maloelap.

In summary, it was explained that a scientific party of two or three would return to Tarawa for two to three weeks in August to run the experiment. They require and were given a small, local cottage to use for sleeping quarters. They also will have ancillary equipment, perhaps too large for the small aircraft, which we will have to send up to Maloelap in advance.

The mayor also suggested they bring a translator since there would be too few English speakers on the island in the summertime. Bob Carlos, the project chief, also walked off and identified a site for the radio receiver and it was acceptable to the local people.

All in all, the visit went very well at Maloelap. The islanders, who live much more traditionally than those with whom we usually deal, earn most of their income from making copra, live simply in thatched and wooden framed cottages (if not in concrete war ruins) and consume mostly local food stuffs and seafood. In fact, the feast that they had arranged for us consisted one-hundred percent of local foods, a great surprise, even to me. Most importantly, we will be able to count on their support and cooperation. We thanked them profusely for their hospitality and support. I went on to add that DOE would not forget their help and intended to leave them suitable community gifts at the end of the experiment in August.

IV. RECOMMENDATIONS

- A. The scientific experiment at Maloelap is going to be larger and lengthier than we had anticipated. It will require more elaborate support than originally envisioned. In order for it to fully succeed, we may have to have the G.W. Pierce deliver and retrograde cargo and supplies before and after the test; we will have to hire and assign a Marshallese translator; and buy several community gifts. I have told Bob Carlos about this and requested he send us a requirements list as soon as possible so we can plan out the support and costs for the mission. He agreed to do so.
- B. We should press the 177 Health Plan personnel on a early decision about participating in our medical mission. BNL has lost confidence in that program and is planning to recruit and bring an additional physician to conduct outer islands sick call unless we can obtain a firm commitment from the 177 Health Plan to send a doctor with us. I have stressed this to both Reynold De Brum and Dr. Solomon, in person, and in writing. We anticipate hearing from them by January 31st.

Original Signed By:
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OP-029:WDJ

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