

April 4, 1980

Jimmy Carter
The President
The White House
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear Mr. President:

We are the hereditary and elected leaders of the Atoll of Enewetak, where your government conducted the testing of nuclear weapons. We are prompted to write to you because today, while here in Washington, we were shown a copy of a letter to you by Amata Kabua, President of the Marshall Islands.

President Kabua, claims to write to you out of concern for our safety. We want you to know, however, that we did not know he was going to send that letter to you, he did not send us a copy of it and we disagree with much of what he says to you.

We would welcome your personally looking into the matter of the resettlement of our islands, but we can tell you now what you will find. When you get all of the facts, you will find that several agencies of your government, with funds generously provided by the United States Congress, have done a magnificent job of cleaning up our islands, constructing houses, churches, schools and other facilities for our use and restoring the tropical agriculture which existed before the testing destroyed everything. Led by Vice Admiral Robert R. Monroe, whom we regard as a kind and dear friend, the Department of Defense was responsible for the cleanup program. The Department of Energy effort, led by Roger Ray, provided valuable support to the cleanup program. The Department of Interior was responsible for the houses and trees. Virtually everyone who was involved dedicated themselves to doing the very best possible job on our behalf.

Because it is a matter of concern to us, we sought the advice of independent scientists regarding the radiation. We had Dr. Michael A. Bender and Dr. A. Bertrand Brill, two very outstanding scientists, study the matter carefully and their advice was that our returning to our homelands would, at the most, increase the risk of ill health by

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less than a single case. We attach great importance to human life, as you do, but we also realize that life has many hazards and many values as well. To us, our decision to resettle our islands was both wise and absolutely necessary.

We take extra reassurance that everything will be alright from the radiological health program which you signed into law just last month, as part of P.L. 96-205. That was an act of great generosity and kindness on your part and we want you to know that we appreciate it very much. It will insure that none of our people will ever receive an excessive amount of radiation.

President Kabua calls upon you to look into this matter and also says that he wants to study it. The Enewetak cleanup and rehabilitation program has been the subject of a great deal of study already, all of which has been provided to President Kabua and other officials of the Marshall Islands over the past nine years. There is nothing more to be studied or discovered, and in fact we are celebrating the completion of the program, at Enewetak Atoll, next week. There is no question that to live in the southern part of the Atoll presents no problem whatsoever. The only possible question is whether people can live on the island of Engebi, one of the two traditional residential communities. We have decided that it can be done, the people in your government are considering the question now.

If what we say is true, then you may wonder why President Kabua is so alarmed, or at least says that he is alarmed on our behalf. We think you will understand when we tell you that it is a simple matter of money and politics. We have insisted, through our counsel, that the United States of America is responsible directly to us for all that we have suffered as a result of the nuclear testing program. Any assistance, whether financial or otherwise, we think, should come directly from the United States Government to us. President Kabua feels otherwise. He wants all of the programs or funds which are intended for our benefit, to be given to him so that he can in turn give it to us. We know President Kabua very well and we do not trust him. For many years in the Marshall Islands he has taken a large share of

funds which he obtained for the benefit of others, all in the name of what he claims to be his rightful prerogatives under our Marshallese customs. We, however, do not recognize his power to do that to us.

If he is able to stop our return to our homeland, he will be able to keep on trying to interfere in our affairs and to put himself between us and the United States Government. That way he will be able to enrich himself at our expense.

The other reason for his letter is politics. The people of our islands have voted against President Kabua and all of his political efforts for many years. We voted in favor of joining the Federated States of Micronesia, not the Marshall Islands Government. We voted against the Constitution of the Marshall Islands. We voted against Amata Kabua when he ran for the Presidency of the Marshall Islands. Perhaps he wishes to punish us for that now and we know him very well as a man who will punish those who disagree with him.

We have studied the matter of resettling our islands very carefully. We have made our choice. We believe that we have the right to resettle our lands unless there is some serious and good reason why we should not. We do not need President Amata Kabua to protect us from ourselves. He has never done anything in his entire life to help us and we reject his false claim to be our friend now.

We send you the deep and profound gratitude of all of our people for all that you and your government have done to help us over the past nine years and we want you to know that we hold no bitterness for what went before.

Sincerely,


Iroij Johannes Peter


Iroij Binton Abraham


Magistrate John Abraham