

Department of the Interior
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APR 1 - 1957

Honorable Carl T. Durham
Chairman, Joint Committee on
Atomic Energy
Congress of the United States

Dear Mr. Durham:

After the relatively heavy fallout on the Marshall Islands March 1954, 82 inhabitants were evacuated first to Kwajalein and to I where they are now living. There have been public statements, issued in by the Atomic Energy Commission, Department of Interior and the Department of State to the effect that these people will be returned to their home Island of Rongelap as soon as health considerations permit. Such a statement was submitted to the 17th Session of the U. N. Trusteeship Council Subcommittee of Pacific Islands on March 27, 1956 by Mr. Vernon D. McKay, Special Representative of the Administering Authorities for the Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands.

Several radiological surveys of the Marshall Islands, especially Rongelap Atoll, have been made during the past two and one-half years. The latest survey (July 23-24, 1956) indicates a present residual contamination on the Island of Rongelap, but at a level that is acceptable from a health point of view, both for the external gamma radiation exposure and the strontium-90 content of the food supply, with the possible exception of land crabs.

Therefore, the position of the Atomic Energy Commission is that Rongelapese could be returned to their home island as soon as rehabilitation procedures on the Island of Rongelap are completed with the advice that land crabs not be eaten at this time. The decision for the return of the Rongelapese have been concurred in by the Department of Interior which is the Government agency responsible for the Trust Territories, and by the Department of State.

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Reconstruction of homes and other facilities on the island, which have deteriorated during the period of inoccupance, will begin in the near future. It is expected that the inhabitants can be returned by early summer.

Sincerely yours,

K. E. Fields

General Manager

cc: Secretariat (1)
General Manager (1)
Congressional Communications Section (2)

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