

OPTIONAL FORM NO. 10
5010-104

UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT

Memorandum

REPOSITORY DOE/PASO
 COLLECTION DOE/NV
 BOX No. 1228, ERDA #3
BIO-MED, DR. CONARD
 FOLDER 01 thru 12/1967

TO : William A. Bonnet, Manager *WAB 11/16*
 Honolulu Area Office

DATE: November 15, 1966

FROM : Neil S. Rasmussen, Contract & Proc. Sp.
 Honolulu Area Office

SUBJECT: STATUS OF PROPERTY IN MARSHALL ISLANDS

The information in this report was obtained from various sources. Very few documents have been located, so the sources are shown to aid the reader in evaluating the validity of facts.

We received a letter from Dr. Conard April 20, 1966 stating there were five buildings he believed belonged to the AEC and two sheds on Utirik. He requested three buildings be retained for the medical survey team and the other two buildings and sheds be given to the natives for materials for a council house.

We requested our Nevada Operations Office to determine the status of these buildings. On June 6, 1966 we received a copy of an Agreement between AEC and the Trust Territory which provided for the T.T. to obtain sites for rad-safe purposes. No specific sites were listed. The letter stated the responsibility for the leases were transferred from AEC to DOD August 9, 1960.

On June 16, 1960 a twx was received from Joint Task Force Eight stating they had no plans for use of the facilities, but DOD interest was not mentioned.

On August 30, ¹⁹⁶⁶ we requested permission to dispose of all similar property on the other islands. AEC Nevada concurred by twx dated September 1, 1966.

In September, during a tour of the Territory, our Contract Specialist, obtained copies of correspondence from T. T. Headquarters which revealed the following information:

An Agreement dated June 1961 between the T. T. and DOD (DASA) was executed to replace the AEC Agreement. The wording is the same except the new Agreement provided for an indefinite term. No specific sites were listed.

In a letter from the T.T. to DASA dated February 26, 1963 they requested the land be returned to the owners and that salvage rights to structures be given the T.T. Six weather/Rad-Safe sites are mentioned. The letter also stated that DASA had indicated in July 1961 that they planned on retaining the sites indefinitely.

In a twx from HICOM to the Department of Interior in July 1963, the deterioration of structures at Ujelang, Wotho, Rongelap and Utirik. It was recommended all sites except Utirik be returned with salvage rights and rental payments through 1963.

In a letter dated August 16, 1963 to the HICOM from DASA stated there was no requirement for the temporary buildings on the six weather/rad-safe sites and were by this action transferred to the HICOM to dispose of as he sees fit. It was also reconfirmed that DASA desired to continue the Agreement for an indefinite period. (Personal observation) Since the Agreement does not list specific sites each lease could be terminated and still continue the Agreement.

In a letter dated June 11, 1964 from the HICOM to DASA, the T. T. requested permission to use DOD buildings located at Kusaie and Kapingamarangi. (Observation) In view of the August 16, 1963 letter it appears the T. T. had the right to dispose of the structures on all the islands anyway they saw fit.

In a letter dated June 19, 1964 from DASA to HICOM the letter of August 16, 1963 was referred to and it was restated that buildings were transferred to the HICOM and Agreement was to continue indefinitely.

It was observed during a recent trip to Rongelap that Rad-Safe structures are still standing although the people would like to have the materials. It appears the action to dispose of structures on all islands except three buildings on Utirik is the responsibility of the T. T. The action to request the return of specific sites to the owners might be accomplished by a request from the HICOM to DOD (DASA) without terminating the Agreement. As near as we

*TT has responsibility
for all structures
- this was given
them by DASA
in Aug 1963
WLB*

can determine the six sites in question are located on the Islands of Ujelang, Rongelap, Utirik, Kusaie, Wotho and Kapingamarangi. Rental of about \$418.00 per year is being paid by DASA. The AEC medical team has two trailers located at Rongelap. It has not been determined if the rental payments cover these sites or just the Rad Safe site at the end of the Island. The rental paid at Utirik probably covers locations of the five buildings previously described.

Mr. Norwood, High Commissioner asked our assistance in determining if Bikini could be returned to the natives who are now living on the Island of Kili. He also requested the salvage rights to vessels used in the tests and abandoned. We requested our Nevada Operations Office to check on these two points. The following response was received by twx 11/10/66.

"Unclas in response to your twx requesting information for High Commissioner W. R. Norwood, we have contacted a number of people in the AEC and other government agencies. A summary of pertinent facts and opinions relative to your questions are as follows:

1. On June 30, 1966, the AEC transferred possession of the Pacific proving grounds, including Bikini Atoll to the Department of Navy. Later the Navy relinquished control of PPG to the Air Force as part of the Western Test Range. Currently the Air Force is conducting classified activities in that area. If you desire details as to the nature of the activities, you should direct inquiries to the Air Force liason officer for the Western Test Range who is stationed in Honolulu. Though a number of radiological surveys and bioenvironmental studies have been conducted at Bikini since the last test there, none were specifically directed toward determining when the islands could be reinhabited. It is the opinion of Dr. Gordon Dunning, Deputy Director, DOS, HQ, and others that, at present, there simply is not enough information about all facets of the radiological problems at Bikini to allow authorities in the AEC to consider reinhabitation of the islands on a completely unrestricted basis.
2. It is the opinion of Mr. Thomas Fleming, Chief Counsel, NVOO, that authority to dispose of the abandoned vessels must be delegated by DOD. At the present time, the

level of radioactivity, if any, contained in the abandoned vessels is not known.

3. Major General A. W. Oberbeck, Commander, JTF-8 has recently sent a letter to DASA stating JTF-8 had no further requirements for the weather/Rad-Safe lease sites on the islands mentioned in your twx. It is not known at this time what further need DASA may have. Further inquiry concerning this subject should be directed to Headquarters, DASA."

It was noted in an article in the New Yorker that the 166 natives of Bikini received \$25,000 in cash and \$300,000 trust fund, which provides a \$10,000 per year income. We do not know if this was an outright purchase of the Island or if the natives still retain some rights.