

R

Subject: Continuing DOE Commitments in the Marshall Islands

Background: Between 1946 and 1958, AEC and DOD conducted 66 nuclear weapons related tests at Bikini and Enewetak Atolls in the Northern Marshalls. High levels of fallout radioactivity were deposited in the test atolls and lesser amounts on atolls located downwind. Residents of Rongelap and Utirik Atolls accidentally received significant radiation exposures from the BRAVO test in 1954, prior to their evacuation, and some additional exposure after returning to their home atolls.

Issues: Radiological cleanup operations have been conducted at both Bikini and Enewetak Atolls through a cooperative effort by DOD and AEC/ERDA. Resettlement of Bikini was terminated in 1978 due to unacceptable levels of radioactivity in locally produced foods and in people. Resettlement of Enewetak is ongoing under numerous restrictions on land and food use. A high percentage of exposed Rongelap residents who were less than 10 years of age in 1954 have had thyroid disease. These persons have received compensation. DOE is providing periodic medical examinations and medical care where needed for exposed residents of both Rongelap and Utirik Atolls. DOE faces the prospect of providing followup radiological monitoring and dose assessments at Bikini, Enewetak, Rongelap, and Utirik Atolls, plus the medical care identified above, for an indefinite period of time.

The U.S. has announced its intention to terminate the Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands, of which the Marshalls is a part, in 1981. DOE conducted a survey of 13 atolls and islands in the Northern Marshalls in anticipation of the ending of this Trust. Under a court agreement, DOE is to provide funding for an independent scientist to review results of this survey. DOE's credibility for providing scientific advice has been questioned in the Marshalls.

For the post Trust Territory period, the Office of Micronesian Status Negotiations will negotiate a "Compact Agreement" specifying certain responsibilities that the U.S. accepts including responsibilities related to the residuals of the U.S. nuclear testing program. These agreements can impact DOE. As discussions on these agreements get underway, the Bikini people have brought suit for \$450 million for property damage, loss of land and land use, and displacement from their home atoll. Additional lawsuits from other Marshallese claiming property damage, loss of land, and injury can be anticipated.

Public Law 96-205, dated March 12, 1980, provides a program of health care, periodic radiological monitoring, and education for the people of "affected atolls". DOI is to provide these services with the assistance of DOD, DOE, and DHEW. DOE will fund this program. The Bill is not workable and requires clarification. Negotiations on this are in progress.