



United States Department of the Interior

OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20240

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Honorable Thomas P. O'Neill, Jr.
Speaker
House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Dear Mr. Speaker:

There is enclosed a proposed bill "To authorize the appropriation of funds for the rehabilitation and resettlement of Bikini Atoll, Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands, and for other purposes."

Bikini Atoll lies among the Marshall Islands, which are a part of the Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands administered by the United States pursuant to an agreement with the Security Council of the United Nations. The United States carried on atomic testing there between 1948 and 1958 which severely damaged Bikini Atoll and rendered much of it uninhabitable.

The United States had committed itself to returning the atoll to its original owners when security purposes no longer required its use for testing or defense purposes, and from 1958 onward the people of Bikini increasingly pressed for a return. Between 1966 and 1967, the former Atomic Energy Commission conducted several radiological surveys, and reported that after cleanup, a certain number of the islands of the atoll were safe for civilian habitation. Accordingly, on August 12, 1968, President Johnson announced that Bikini Atoll was no longer required for the nuclear testing program or for defense purposes, and that the atoll would be returned to the people of Bikini following cleanup and rehabilitation. In his announcement, the President stressed that a modern and model community would be provided for the returning residents.

In June 1975 an intensive ground radiological survey was conducted by ERDA and it revealed that the original recommendations concerning resettlement on Bikini Island needed drastic revision. It became evident that radionuclide intake in the plant food chain had been grossly miscalculated in terms of human consumption. The results of

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the 1975 ERDA survey led to the decision that an aerial radiological survey be done for Bikini Atoll also. This kind of aerial survey can reveal residual results not available from ground techniques, particularly the presence of plutonium in the soil. The aerial radiological survey is expected to be carried out in early 1978, and results for Bikini Atoll will be available shortly thereafter.

The 1975 EPDA radiological survey demonstrated conclusively that the interior of Bikini Island should not be used for residential purposes; that well water should not be used for human consumption; and that locally grown food products must be placed on a restricted basis as far as consumption by the people is concerned. By late 1976, it was evident that coconut trees, formerly not expected to pose a recycling danger, were also suspected. The restriction on the use of coconut products produced on Bikini Island for food and export additionally make the island of Bikini unrealistic as a permanent place of settlement and for agricultural use.

It is now clear that the use of Bikini Island cannot be considered at the present time as the site for permanent resettlement for the approximately 500 Bikinians who seek to return, or for immediate agricultural purposes. In short, a complete recasting of the Bikini Resettlement Program is required.

A Master Plan for Bikini Resettlement, completed in 1974, revised the original 1969 plans for development of the atoll. This 1974 Master Plan envisioned using both Bikini Island and Eneu Island for habitation and for agricultural purposes.

Since action on the Bikini resettlement problem is urgently needed, a number of alternative plans currently are being considered. The most feasible, at present, appears to be to concentrate the major resettlement project on Eneu Island. This Island, which lies approximately 12 miles south of Bikini Island, did not, in contrast with Bikini, receive significant amounts of radiation fallout, and radiation exposure of people living there would meet U.S. Federal safety standards. A preliminary recasting of the 1974 Bikini Master Plan indicated that approximately \$13 million will be required to rehabilitate Eneu Island and to develop suitable residential community facilities there. 21,000 coconut trees already have been planted on Eneu Island and are bearing. Analysis reveals that these Eneu Island coconuts can be used for food and possible future copra export. Additionally, there are smaller islands available which must be planted

with coconut groves and other food crops to replace the coconut groves and garden plots on Bikini Island which, for the foreseeable future, will continue to be restricted as to use.

Experimental garden plots for vegetables, breadfruit, and other crops have been established on Eneu Island and are flourishing. Analytic test results of these garden crops will be available by early summer, 1978. Since coconuts on Eneu Island already have been tested and are safe, it is expected, in view of the vastly lower radioactivity level of the Eneu soil, that other food crops also will be useable.

The restrictions on the use of Bikini Island, however, do pose the question as to whether all of the approximately 500 Bikinians who have indicated a strong desire to return to Bikini Atoll, can be adequately accommodated on Eneu Island. Even if they can it is anticipated that a small group of Bikinians will elect to remain on Kili Island. Estimates for rehabilitation of the Kili Island community facilities are set at a minimum of \$2,000,000, thus making the overall Bikini Rehabilitation Request \$15 million at 1977 prices.

Should the present tests being undertaken on Eneu Island demonstrate that island's unsuitability for agricultural purposes, or if the aerial survey reveals unexpected negative results, then resettlement of the Bikinians may have to be considered outside the area of Bikini Atoll. Kili Island, even though it might be rehabilitated and developed, does not possess enough land area sufficient to support the people of Bikini in the future. Its lack of a lagoon prohibits, to a great extent, exploitation of marine resources. Any resettlement elsewhere will entail sums equal to, if not greater than, the amount requested in this authorization. It is therefore essential that an authorization be approved by Congress to enable this Department to start the initial phase of the final resettlement of the people of Bikini.

The Office of Management and Budget has advised that there is no objection to the presentation of this draft bill from the standpoint of the Administration's program.

Sincerely,

SECRETARY

Enclosure

A BILL

To authorize the appropriation of funds for the rehabilitation and resettlement of Bikini Atoll, Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands, and for other purposes.

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled, That there are hereby authorized to be appropriated not more than \$15 million (December 1977 prices) plus or minus such amount, if any, as may be justified by reason of ordinary fluctuations in construction costs as indicated by engineering cost indices applicable to the types of construction involved, for rehabilitation and resettlement of Bikini Atoll.