

STATEMENT OF UNDERSTANDING
ON THE PART OF THE
GOVERNMENT OF THE UNITED STATES
AND THE GOVERNMENT OF THE TRUST TERRITORY OF THE PACIFIC ISLANDS
CONCERNING THE
MOVE OF THE PEOPLE OF BIKINI ISLAND, AUGUST, 1978

1. On August 11, 1978, the Undersecretary of the Department of the
2. Interior, James A. Joseph, the Deputy Undersecretary, Wallace Green, and
3. the Director of the Office of Territorial Affairs, Ruth G. Van Cleve,
4. journeyed to Bikini Island to meet with its current residents. The purpose
5. of their meeting was to convey information on the subject of the forthcoming
6. move by the people of Bikini Island to Kili Island, and to respond to ques-
7. tions and hear concerns put to them by the people of Bikini Island. They
8. had earlier, on August 7, held a similar meeting with former residents of
9. Bikini who now reside on Kili. The High Commissioner of the Trust Territory
10. of the Pacific Islands, Adrian P. Winkel, had been prevented by bad weather
11. in Saipan from joining in the visit to Bikini Island, but he had earlier met
12. with the people of Bikini, as well as with other Bikinians on Kili.

13.
14. In 1946, the people of Bikini were removed from their atoll by the
15. U. S. Navy in order to enable the United States to use the atoll for a
16. nuclear testing program which lasted until 1958. The islanders were moved
17. first to Rongerik, then to Kwajalein, and ultimately to Kili. In the late
18. 1960's, it appeared that levels of radiation on Bikini atoll were such that
19. the people could return to and use a number of the major islands of the atoll.
20. Beginning in 1969, a clean-up of the atoll and a rehabilitation program was
21. begun. In the early 1970's, some Bikini people were employed in the project
22. and the Bikini Island population increased to approximately 185 in 1973. In
23. 1977, the intake of radionuclides by the people living on Bikini Island had
24. increased to alarming proportions, and a major feeding program was insti-
25. tuted. April, 1978 surveys showed that the feeding program had not resulted

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1. decrease in the radionuclide body burden. The Department of the
2. Interior decided, in the light of the evidence presented by the Department
3. of Energy, that the people living on Bikini should be moved at the earliest
4. practicable date. An aerial/radiological survey currently underway and other
5. radiological tests on Bikini being conducted by the Department of Energy
6. will determine whether Bikini will ever, in the foreseeable future, be
7. considered as a home for the Bikini people.

8.
9. Among the requests of the people of both Bikini and Kili was a
10. request for a statement in writing of the understandings that the repre-
11. sentatives of the United States conveyed during these meetings and of the
12. commitments that those representatives were willing to make. The follow-
13. ing are intended to respond to the principal concerns then and there
14. expressed.*

15.
16. Mr. Joseph and Mrs. Van Cleve, on behalf of the Government of the
17. United States, and Mr. Winkel, on behalf of the Government of the Trust
18. Territory, offered the following assurances:

19.
20. I. The Government of the United States considers itself generally
21. responsible for the well being of the Bikini people and their descendants
22. and, following consultation with them, the Government of the United States
23. will seek to arrange their relocation, permanently, in the most satisfactory
24. manner possible. The Department of the Interior will undertake to obtain
25. such authority and such resources as may be required in order to meet and

*On August 14, 1978, when the two Bikini and Kili officers, the four
officers referred to above were involved in a major airplane accident
off the coast of Guam. Although they were among the survivors, their
notes taken at the meetings sunk with the airplane. This statement,
drafted by Mrs. Van Cleve on August 15 at the Guam Naval Hospital is
intended to be as full as recollections permit, but in the circumstances
it may not be complete.

1. discharge this responsibility. The Department of the Interior will call upon
2. other agencies of the United States Government to assist it, particularly the
3. Department of Energy, so as to assure that, among other things, the medical
4. needs of the current residents of Bikini Island continue to be met.

5.
6. II. Because Kili Island has, until recent weeks, been regarded as
7. solely a temporary relocation site for the people of Bikini, the Governments
8. have never undertaken to construct permanent facilities there, nor to improve
9. significantly any of the existing Kili facilities. It is now known that
10. Bikini Island will not be fit for human habitation for decades to come, and
11. on the basis of the most recent scientific information, it appears that Eneu
12. Island, in the Bikini Atoll, will also be unavailable for settlement. In
13. the circumstances, the Governments understand that some of the Bikini people
14. will choose to remain on Kili indefinitely, and the Governments will accord-
15. ingly undertake a program for the permanent rehabilitation of Kili.

16.
17. III. It is not yet possible to develop a permanent relocation plan
18. for the people of Bikini. That plan must await completion of the aerial/
19. radiological survey that is now underway, and that is expected to be com-
20. pleted no later than the early weeks of 1979. When those survey results
21. are available and evaluated, and when any remaining scientific tests found
22. necessary are also completed, all of which developments are expected to
23. occur in the first months of 1979, it will be possible to identify safe
24. relocation sites. The Governments will then, following full consultation
25. with the people of Kili (including the current residents of Bikini Island
26. who will by then have relocated there), plan in detail for the relocation
27. of such Kili residents as choose to move elsewhere, affording to them a
28. choice among the possible relocation sites. Those who choose to remain on
29. Kili will be accommodated there.

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3. IV. The Governments understand that many, and possibly all, of the
4. current residents of Bikini Island would prefer, because they cannot remain
5. on Bikini, to live on Eniwetok Island in the Bikini Atoll. Although the best
6. current information suggests that that will not be possible, if later
7. tests should show Eniwetok can be safely inhabited, the Governments pledge that
8. all Bikinians who choose to do so may move to Eniwetok, to the full extent that
9. the size and resources of Eniwetok permit.

10. V. In the meantime the Governments have constructed twenty-eight
11. temporary houses on Kili, one each for each family now residing on Bikini
12. Island. This construction is expected to be completed either by the day
13. on which the Bikini Island residents return to Kili, or within a few days
14. thereafter, depending upon weather conditions on Kili in the last half of
15. August, 1978. Because a visit to Kili reveals that certain necessary
16. community facilities there are either seriously inadequate or nonexistent,
17. the Governments will undertake forthwith the construction of certain temporary
18. facilities: a new dispensary, a new school, an addition to the church, and
19. an addition to the civic assembly building. These facilities, which are
20. expected to be completed by the fall of 1978, will be of temporary con-
21. struction because they can thereby be erected with great speed, and because
22. the need for them should not be left unmet during the several months during
23. which permanent facilities are planned and constructed. Such permanent
24. facilities will be provided as a part of the rehabilitation of Kili referred
25. to in assurance number II.

26. VI. The Governments recognize the necessity of providing a dock at
27. Kili. They will commence immediately to cause the engineering feasibility
28. of such a dock to be explored, and assuming both engineering feasibility
29. and the availability of the necessary funds, neither of which is expected
30. to pose a problem, the construction of a dock at Kili is expected to begin

Spring of 1979.

VII. The Governments recognize that the island of Bikini and the Bikini Atoll are places of unique importance to the people of Bikini and their descendants, and that it is therefore important to them to be able to view and visit Bikini, even if only briefly. The Government of the Trust Territory will therefore arrange, when Trust Territory shipping schedules permit, to transport Bikini Residents living on Kili (including the current Bikini Island residents about to move there) for visits from time to time to Bikini. Such visits will necessarily be brief, and it will not be possible for the Bikini visitors to reside, even briefly, on Bikini Island nor, probably, on Eneu Island. Such brief visits will, however, occur from time to time, as shipping schedules reasonably permit and as the wishes of the Bikinians indicate.

VIII. The Governments recognize that the current residents of Bikini Island will encounter personal hardships, as well as certain expenses, attendant upon their forthcoming move. The Governments will therefore, pay, as a lump sum relocation allowance, the sum of \$100.72 per person, to the head of each family on Bikini Island. That sum is not intended to constitute compensation, in whole or in part, for any damage the Bikini Island residents may be found to have sustained. It is intended instead to be a one-time payment to facilitate their forthcoming move to Kili Island. The Government of the United States has arranged for the current Bikini Island residents to stop at Kwajalein, while enroute to Kili, to make purchases there.

The foregoing memoranda of understandings are not intended to be exhaustive. They are intended to respond to the major concerns expressed at the meeting on Bikini and Kili on August 11 and 7, 1978.

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James G. Joseph
Undersecretary of the Interior
RJR:RPW

Ruth E. Van Fleet
Director, Office of Territorial Affairs
RJR:RPW

Adrian P. Wall
High Commissioner, Trust Territory of
the Pacific Islands

9. Dated: August 16, 1975

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