



DEFENSE NUCLEAR AGENCY
FIELD COMMAND
KIRTLAND AIR FORCE BASE, NEW MEXICO 87115

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Kirtland

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18 October 1978

MEMORANDUM FOR: Director, Defense Nuclear Agency

SUBJECT: Enewetak Issues and Meetings

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1. You will recall that at our 12 October luncheon with High Commissioner Winkel and Mr. Ted Mitchell, we all agreed that it was necessary to get on with plans for considering the early resettlement of the dri-Enewetak on the atoll and to continue a priority effort to select and analyze appropriate alternatives for planting of some 14,000 coconut trees previously planned for the northeastern islands. Several actions came out of that meeting:

a. You indicated your desire to send Mrs. Ruth Clusen, Assistant Secretary for Environment, DOE, a letter which would force DOE to provide a more responsive answer concerning contamination levels than that provided to you by Mr. Joe Deal in his letter of 29 September. A draft of this proposed letter to Mrs. Clusen is attached.

b. We all agreed that we should meet as soon as possible with the dri-Enewetak to present them with the early resettlement option and the coconut tree planting alternatives in order that they could assist us in making decisions on these matters. High Commissioner Winkel indicated that he could insure that transportation was provided to get the people from Ujelang Atoll to Enewetak about a week before your joint trip on 4-6 December so that there would be time to brief them on the problems and options before you arrive. Ted Mitchell also indicated that he would be willing to coordinate this matter with the Council and insure that they could be on the atoll during this period. The attached draft message to both High Commissioner Winkel and Mr. Mitchell summarizes the action taken with respect to Mrs. Clusen and requests their assistance in these two areas.

2. If we are to make logical choices based on a solid group of alternatives as opposed to restrictions on our choices, I strongly believe that DNA must take further initiative. Recommend that you sign this letter to Mrs. Clusen and the message to High Commissioner Winkel and Mr. Mitchell. These actions should get the ball rolling to secure better radiological information than we now have and promote needed meetings with the dri-Enewetak. In any event, it puts the issues squarely before the people who have the authority and responsibility to render decisions on these matters.

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GRAYSON D. TATE, JR.
Brigadier General (P), USA
Commander

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(DNA HEADQUARTERS LETTERHEAD)

(date)

Mrs. Ruth C. Clusen
Assistant Secretary for Environment
Department of Energy
Washington, DC 20545

Dear Secretary Clusen,

I enjoyed very much meeting with you on 12 October at the meeting chaired by Undersecretary of Interior Joseph concerning ongoing activities at Bikini and Enewetak Atolls. I do regret, however, that you were unable to remain for the status reports given by High Commissioner Winkel and myself concerning the rehabilitation and cleanup efforts, respectively, for Enewetak.

Both efforts are going extremely well in spite of the fact that, as I am sure you are aware, the cleanup criteria have changed several times during the project. In the cleanup project, we are well ahead of schedule in removing both contaminated and uncontaminated debris and on schedule for our contaminated soil removal based upon the revised criteria. High Commissioner Winkel reported that the rehabilitation project is also moving smoothly with houses being completed for the dri-Enewetak residence and with over 38,000 coconut tree seedlings having been delivered by the end of this month to initiate the nurseries on Enewetak and Medren islands. Although we believe that both efforts will meet the scheduled completion date of 15 April 1980, both of us expressed concern at the meeting regarding one area.

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This is the problem concerned with the planting of coconut seedlings on six of the northeastern islands of the atoll as has been always scheduled in the DOI master rehabilitation plan. In a message of 25 September 1978 (attached as Inclosure 1), I expressed my concern as the DOD cleanup project program manager, and directed that my field agency in Albuquerque work together with all participants in this project to determine alternatives for planting of the some 14,000 coconut seedlings, should it be determined that they could not be planted in the northeastern islands because of radiological reasons. We are actively pursuing this search for alternatives at the present time.

On 29 September 1978, I received a letter from Mr. Joe Deal of your staff (Incl 2) which stated that DOE believed "it is not prudent to plan on planting coconuts in the northern islands this growing season." I am disturbed by this response for several reasons:

a. Both the cleanup and rehabilitation efforts are at peak momentum. A sudden change at this time to the approved plans for planting in the northeast as recommended in Mr. Deal's letter would seriously disrupt the ongoing program.

b. Mr. Deal's letter indicates that the data used in making this recommendation are based upon a survey conducted in 1972 before we had removed soil from the contaminated islands and had disturbed the remaining soil in our cleanup efforts. During the current cleanup project, many soil samples have been taken on these northern islands, but since our task is to clean up the transuranics, your people have analyzed the soil only for these elements and not for the suburanic elements such as

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strontium and cesium which are the radionuclides causing the problem with respect to planting of coconut trees. Analysis of this more recent data might well reveal lower levels of these two nuclides than were reported in the 1974 survey, and consequently, possibly permit planting on some or all of these northeastern islands. In any event, information provided in Mr. Deal's letter was not sufficient to provide a convincing rationale for changing these long-agreed-to plans to plant coconuts on the northeast islands.

c. During a 4 May 1978 conference on Enewetak, one of the most significant changes made in the cleanup plan was the decision to ~~complete~~^{initiate} removal of soil containing high levels of transuranics from Enjebi and attempt to bring it down as nearly as possible to the residential criterion level of 40 picocuries per gram (pCi/g). This decision meant that the dri-Enjebi people might be able to return to their home island at some time in the future (perhaps 30-50 years) when radionuclides, such as strontium and cesium, had further decayed. We have, in fact, now made the decision to proceed with soil removal so as to attain the residential level of 40 pCi/g, and the cleanup forces are fully engaged in achieving this important task. Mr. Deal's letter recommended that coconut trees not be planted now on any of the northeast islands or Enjebi. Yet, we know that if the people are eventually to live on Enjebi, they must have a means for subsistence and growing cash crops such as commercial coconut or copra. It would appear that Enjebi will present little or no more risk than any of the northeast islands. Further, it offers a single island site for over 10,000 coconut trees.

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d. At this time, we are firmly committed to terminate the cleanup and rehabilitation of Enewetak on 15 April 1980. By this date, all DOD, DOE, and DOI operations are to be complete, including the planting of coconut trees. As you are aware, the lack of adequate transuranic characterization data in the northern islands delayed the start of soil removal on these islands. Fortunately, we were able to concentrate on debris removal, and thus avoid delaying the entire cleanup program. It now appears that the lack of adequate current suburanic characterization data is having a delaying effect on plans for the rehabilitation and resettlement efforts. If all coconut trees are not planted in this planting season (Jun-Nov 79), there will be no other optimum planting opportunities prior to 15 April 1980. Consequently, there would be no DOD-provided base facilities to support such an effort (aircraft, boats, billets, mess, communications, fuel, etc.). Therefore, the complete implementation of the coconut tree planting program in 1979 seems essential.

Incidentally, regardless of the final decision on planting a full density of trees on any of the northern islands, it would seem to me to be very prudent to at least plant a "minimum grid" of trees on all the principal islands. If this is not done now, how will the data be obtained to allow studies and analysis concerning the eventual usefulness of these islands for commercial coconut agriculture?

I know that we are all extremely concerned about the events that have occurred on Bikini, and that none of us desire to see this repeated on Enewetak Atoll. Nevertheless, as Undersecretary Joseph so ably pointed

out, we must do all that we can to permit Enewetak people to return to as near a normal life as is possible. We, therefore, should not let ourselves develop a Bikini syndrome which would cause us to make decisions which will affect these people through generations without insuring that we have carefully examined all possibilities.

As I have indicated above, DNA, in coordination with DOI and DOE, is looking at all alternatives, to include planting on Enjebi and on one, two, or all of the six northeastern islands, as well as alternatives for planting elsewhere on the atoll. We hope to have this alternatives study in draft form and seek your comments by about 1 November. It is urgent that we have the best information possible in order that we may choose the correct alternatives to present to the dri-Enewetak for their decision. I plan to visit the atoll on 4-6 December, and would like to invite you to join me and other cleanup participants on this trip. If we can have the coconut tree planting alternatives defined, we plan to explain these to the dri-Enewetak Council prior to that trip and then on the trip, perhaps we can reach some firm decisions during our discussions with them.

I urge you to have your staff, including those at DOE-NVO and on the atoll, begin a high priority analysis of all data on these northern islands, including available updated information and that which can be produced quickly, based upon analysis of recent soil samples taken from the northeastern islands and on Enjebi in order to assist this process. Due to the short time available, this analysis would have to proceed now at

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full pace if the information is to be available in time to be useful for our consideration on 4-6 December. The information is needed in early to mid-November. I solicit your personal support in this matter.

Sincerely,

VADM Monroe

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and can be added
CF: ~~there~~)
Undersecretary Joseph, DOI
HICOM, TTPI

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