

STATEMENT OF HIGH COMMISSIONER ADRIAN P. WINKEL BEFORE THE  
INTERIOR AND RELATED AGENCIES SUBCOMMITTEE, COMMITTEE ON  
APPROPRIATIONS, HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES, CONCERNING  
RESETTLEMENT OF THE PEOPLE OF BIKINI, JUNE 19, 1978

Mr. Chairman, Members of the Committee:

In accordance with the decisions made at your May 22nd meeting, I discussed with the people of Bikini Island their forthcoming move from that island and their preference as to relocation sites. These meetings were held over a period of 24 hours, on Thursday and Friday, June 1 and 2, with virtually all of the people of the Island--men, women, and children--in attendance at the first meeting, and 35 to 40 people (the adult male population) at the succeeding two meetings.

Subsequently, on Monday, June 5, a meeting was held with the people of Kili Island for the same purposes, with about 100 people in attendance.

In the opening remarks at Bikini I explained to the people that I was there to inform them it was necessary that they move from Bikini Island, that Eneu Island also was not considered safe enough to allow their living on it at this time, and that four relocation sites were suggested for their consideration and decision.

At the second meeting on Friday, June 2, various spokesmen outlined the preferences of the people as follows:

- 1) Stay on Bikini Island until further information is available about Eneu food and its levels of radioactivity. The people reasoned that they would have to

wait on Bikini Island for 75 to 90 days until a new site was prepared, and, also, that additional information about the food on Eneu would be available in a similar period of time. Therefore, they saw no reason why a final decision could not be delayed. They offered to move to Eneu in the meantime if Bikini was considered to be unsafe for that time period.

- 2) Move to "public domain" land in the State of Hawaii or in mainland United States. The people's reason for this preference was that there is no island in the Marshalls to which they could move which would not be the property of other islanders, and that they would not feel free to move about the island as they desired, or to fish where they thought it best, etc. It was their understanding that there is "public domain" land in the United States which belongs to no one person or group and that, on such land, they would not be living on another person's land. Their spokesman stated they understood the problems of the culture and climate adjustments they would encounter.
- 3) If preferences numbers one and two are not possible, the various spokesmen stated they had no further preferences and that they would leave the choice of a location to me.

The same preferences were expressed by some spokesmen at the Kili meeting. It was clear that some of the people on Kili wish to join the Bikini Island residents, either on Bikini Island or wherever they may relocate. There also is a group which wishes to remain on Kili and it seems quite certain that it is composed of the majority of the people.

I told the people that preference number one appeared to be logical and justified and that I would recommend it if I found it to be so after further consideration. Since then I have learned of more detailed results of the analysis of coconuts than were available to me at the time of the May 22 hearing and of my visit to Bikini. Analysis of other kinds of foodstuffs grown on Eneu is now underway and the Department of Energy informs me that the results will be known at the end of August. Tests for strontium 90 will take longer and those results will not be available until next January or February.

I am advised by the Department of Energy that the August results will probably not change the predictions based on the 1978 data of Eneu coconuts. Therefore, Eneu as a habitation continues to present unacceptable risks. The Department of Energy needs to continue its testing of Eneu, but in terms of meeting the immediate settlement needs of the Bikini people, I am convinced another location must be found.

I have asked the Department of Energy to complete the tests on Eneu foodstuffs as rapidly as is possible and I have been assured that the task has the highest priority. While we fully share the hopes of the people of Bikini that Eneu will be found to be acceptable, prudence requires us to look to another location for their temporary resettlement.

Preference number two obviously involves extensive study, and a temporary relocation would be necessary in the meantime, in any case.

Of the four proposed relocation sites, I visited two during my recent trip, namely, Kili Island and Jabwor Island in Jaluit Atoll. The third site, Majuro, I have visited many times, and the fourth Ailinglaplap, was considered to be the least acceptable to the people.

Jabwor Island in Jaluit Atoll and Kili Island are considered to be the best sites, although both have serious disadvantages as well as certain advantages. The pros and cons of Jabwor Island are as follows:

1) Jabwor Island

Pros

- a) People of Bikini have rights to area on Jabwor Island which would be their residential area,
- b) Has a lagoon with good fishing.
- c) Better community facilities--schools (elementary

and secondary), health (dispensary).

- d) Accessible--close to Majuro, good harbor.
- e) People of Bikini have rights to three other small islands in Jaluit Atoll which would be acceptable for limited agricultural production.

Cons

- a) Bikini people have no formal fishing rights in lagoon.
- b) Residential area is hemmed in by ocean, lagoon, and immediately adjacent village. Would be crowded.
- c) Physical conditions are very conducive to lack of freedom of movement, loss of identity, etc., about which Bikinians express concern.
- d) Special programs for Bikinians--food program, ex gratia payments, etc.--are a possible cause of friction between indigenous population and Bikinians.

The advantages and disadvantages of Kili Island are as follows:

2) Kili Island

Pros

- a) Kili is occupied only by Bikinians and is not regarded as an island belonging to others.
- b) Kili is an island with what is considered in the Marshalls to be good soil with some agricultural

potential. Physically, the island itself is much more comparable to Bikini than Jabwor Island, except for the lack of a lagoon.

- c) Kili provides the means, for the present, of the Bikini and Kili people remaining together.

Cons

- a) Serious disadvantage of difficulty of access during four months of year because of no reef and lagoon.
- b) Lack of community facilities--school buildings, dispensary, community hall, warehouse, etc.

On the basis of all of the factors outlined above, it is my decision that the people of Bikini Island should be relocated to Kili Island at this time. Kili Island's deficiencies are primarily physical in nature and can be overcome in time. The major problems of Jabwor Island involve serious questions of relationships between the peoples, which are more difficult to deal with and are less susceptible to resolution. The Administration's legislative proposal for Bikini rehabilitation, and the legislation just recently approved by the House of Representatives, provide a funding base for starting the necessary work on Kili Island, other than the construction of the temporary facilities, which, as Mrs. Van Cleve stated, is underway at this time. In summary, therefore, it is my judgment that the best

balanced program will be to (1) unite the people on Kili and to make the improvements in physical facilities which will be necessary, in any case, for the people who choose to remain on Kili, and (2) to proceed with the planning of permanent facilities at a location to be determined after a decision is finally made concerning whether or not Eneu can be used. I believe strongly that the intense desire of the people to stay in the Bikini Atoll by going to Eneu justifies our proceeding in a manner which keeps that option open until additional data is available from DOE, presumably, I understand, some time in 1979.

Another possibility which we will explore as an interim measure is the possible joint use of Kili Island and the available area on Jabwor Island by the people. The two islands are relatively close to each other--about a six hour trip by ship--and they complement and supplement each other. It may be possible to ultimately locate some people on Kili and some on Jabwor, or develop a method by which the people (on their own volition) can rotate between Kili and Jaluit. This will require considerable discussion with the people after they are on Kili.

Finally, I want to take this opportunity to publicly express my admiration for the people of Bikini and Kili. In the most difficult and trying of times, upon receiving information

for the second time in a generation that they must leave their islands, they conducted themselves with complete dignity. Theirs was the wisdom born of many sorrows. They were responsible and objective in their statements, apologizing for being emotional when their conduct was the essence of composure and restraint. These are a proud and sensitive people, with good reason for being so.

As a footnote, I add that over all of the meetings on Bikini, three flags flew in the stiff wind, the flags of the Trust Territory, the United Nations, and the United States. The people of Bikini put them there.