

R

APR 1 1957

Honorable Carl T. Durham
 Chairman, Joint Committee on
 Atomic Energy
 Congress of the United States

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Dear Mr. Durham:

After the relatively heavy fallout on the Marshall Islands March 1, 1954, 82 inhabitants were evacuated first to Kwajalein and to Ejit where they are now living. There have been public statements, concurred in by the Atomic Energy Commission, Department of Interior and the Department of State to the effect that these people will be returned to their home Island of Rongelap as soon as health considerations permit. Such a statement was submitted to the 17th Session of the U. N. Trusteeship Council Subcommittee of Petitions, March 27, 1956 by Mr. Vernon D. McKay, Special Representative of the Administering Authorities for the Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands.

Several radiological surveys of the Marshall Islands, especially Rongelap Atoll, have been made during the past two and one-half years. The latest survey (July 23-24, 1956) indicates a presence of a residual contamination on the Island of Rongelap, but at a level that is acceptable from a health point of view, both for the potential external gamma radiation exposure and the strontium-90 content in the food supply, with the possible exception of land crabs.

Therefore, the position of the Atomic Energy Commission is that the Rongelapese could be returned to their home island as soon as rehabilitation procedures on the Island of Rongelap are completed, with the advice that land crabs not be eaten at this time. The plans for the return of the Rongelapese have been concurred in by the Department of Interior which is the Government agency responsible for the Trust Territories, and by the Department of State.

1182007

REPOSITORY Washington National Records Center
 COLLECTION 32681-6
 BOX No. BOX-1
 FOLDER _____

Honorable Carl T. Durham

- 2 -

Reconstruction of homes and other facilities on the island, which have deteriorated during the period of inoccupance, will begin in the near future. It is expected that the inhabitants can be returned by early summer.

Sincerely yours,

W. J. ...

General Manager

cc: Secretariat (1)
General Manager (1)
Congressional Communications Section (2)

1182008