



UNITED STATES
DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
OFFICE OF TERRITORIES
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20240

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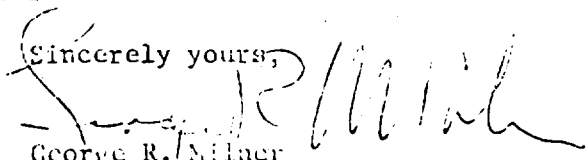
Dear Colonel Gomes:

Confirming our conversation of the other day, we should greatly appreciate your looking into the possibility of obtaining a small nuclear power plant which could provide power for the Bikini community. The primary uses would be power for a radio transmitter, school, dispensary, church and a community building. We are anticipating an ultimate population of 300 to 400 persons on Bikini. Probably most of the individual homes would not be served with electrical power. Over the long haul, we would look toward power demands from a small guest-house type facility and, possibly, a science center.

As a related matter, the High Commissioner would like to determine the position of the AEC and the Defense Department with respect to the test ships that were sunk in the Bikini lagoon as a result of tests there. Over the years we have had proposals from people seeking to salvage the vessels and, now that the atoll is to be resettled, such inquiries will probably increase. The basic question is, I should think, whether the vessels are known or believed to be "hot" to an extent that would preclude salvage. Perhaps the AEC has some information on this or, perhaps, this is information that would have to be developed. Mr. Norwood is under the impression that Mr. McCraw was of the opinion that the ships are possibly still dangerous and that a salvage attempt should be preceded by a reassessment of the hazard.

If the ships are "salvable," I suppose the next step would be to determine "title" or ownership. Some were former United States vessels and others were former enemy vessels. In the circumstances, Defense might impose some claim or restrictions on them. In any event, I would appreciate your having the appropriate people in AEC look into this question as well. I'm sending Commander Kuhn a copy of this letter and asking him to look into the question, too. If the ships proved to be of some salvage value, we would consider devoting the royalties or proceeds from the salvage to the use of the Bikini people, either directly or by way of their trust fund.

Sincerely yours,


George R. Milner
Assistant Director
Pacific Division

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