May 17, 1967

To: Dr. Edward E. Hild
Chief of Party, Bikini Survey of 1967

From: Jack A. Tobin
Anthropologist, Bikini Survey of 1967

Subj: Preliminary report of above survey.

I have submitted a detailed Bikini Survey Log to you. This contains, as you know, complete descriptions of each island and island in the atoll. I have also submitted, at your request, a map with the local names of these land units, coded with the presently accepted designations.

Included in this log, which covers every day of the survey, are data pertinent to the rehabilitation of each island, the economic potential of the individual island and surrounding reefs and marine areas, and other data of significance in planning for the possible return of the former Bikini inhabitants to this atoll. These data will be included in my final report.

The present report will primarily attempt to answer the questions posed by you and other members of the survey party. As you know, some of the important questions asked cannot be answered at this time. Additional research, interviewing, and data from the field will be needed for a complete report.

As you know, I will return to the Marshall about 1 July, 1967 as an employee of the Trust Territory administration. I will be able to obtain further first hand information, which will be transmitted to you. For these reasons, the present report is to be regarded as preliminary. If you, or other members of the survey team have any further questions, or suggestions send them to me. I will try to obtain the answers to them.

Sincerely,

Jack A. Tobin
Brief Historical Background

The Bikini people had lived on their atoll for many generations. They, and their fellow Marshallese came under the domination of foreigners less than one hundred years ago. The German regime was succeeded by that of the Japanese at the onset of World War I. The Japanese rule was terminated by the American forces during World War II.

Contact with the Outside World

The people of Bikini Atoll were not the isolated Twentieth Century "Stone Age primitives" as described/sensationalist news reporters, and other journalists. They were and are, however, less sophisticated than other more acculturated Marshallese, but they had been in contact with the rest of the Marshall Islands, and had been exposed to at least some of the aspects of Western culture.

Every two months a Japanese schooner visited Bikini to purchase copra and to sell food, clothing, and other goods. Every six months a Japanese official made a visit to the atoll. Some of the Bikini people visited other atolls, married out, and attended school elsewhere. Other Marshallese visited Bikini.

The small Bikini community had developed a close in-group feeling during the years of relative isolation prior to the coming of the white men, and found satisfaction and security in their closely knit personal relationships and communal life.

World War II and the Bikini People

The Bikini people were directly affected by World War II in that three of their young men who had been attending the Japanese government school on Jaluit Atoll, were drafted as laborers and sent to Enewetak Atoll. They were later killed there in the American bombing and bombardment of that huge and important Japanese
military base. There were only six Japanese soldiers at Bikini, however, wireless station operators who also manned the ammunition stores. These men were all killed by American bombing and shelling. Little damage was done to Bikini however, and the Bikini people were much better off than Marshallse in areas such as Jaluit, Eniwetok and Kwajalein where heavy fighting occurred. The Bikini people suffered, as did the other Marshallse, from the cut-off of supply lines from Japan with the resultant cessation of imports of necessary consumer goods, and exportation of copra. Communications were restored and war-time hardships were alleviated when the American armed forces captured the Marshall Islands early in 1944. The serious hardships of the Bikini people were yet to come however.

Evacuation of Bikini

Early in 1946 it was decided that Bikini Atoll was the most suitable location for the testing of atomic weapons. The Bikini people were asked to leave and, as might have been expected of a people of their historical conditioning to obedience, especially after more than a quarter of a century of autocratic Japanese rule, agreed to leave their ancestral home. The possibilities of resettlement in the Marshalls were very limited due to the fact that land is scarce (only about 7½ square miles) and that very little of it is available for settlement. The Marshallse jealously guard their land rights and will not willingly part with them.

Problems of Resettlement

The 166 Bikinians were offered the choice of moving to either Ujae, Loe, or Bengerik, all atolls in the northwestern Marshalls. Ujae and Loe were already regularly inhabited, but Bengerik was only exploited by the people of neighboring Rongelap who had land rights in the atoll. These people visited Bengerik to make copra, to fish, and to gather other foods. For this reason, presumably, as well as

the fact that it was the closest to Bikini, the Bikini people opted to go to Rongerik rather than Ujelal or Lae.

A village was built on Rongerik by Navy Seabees and a group of Bikini men, and all of the Bikini people were moved to that atoll on March 6, 1946. Rongerik has a dry land area of 0.65 square miles, scattered over approximately 17 islands. It has a lagoon area of 55.38 square miles. This is considerably smaller than the 2,32 square mile land area and 229,40 square mile lagoon area of Bikini, with its 36 islands.

The attempt to settle at Rongerik was a failure, allegedly due to the insufficient natural resources. A Board of Investigation convened by the Navy on June 2, 1947, recommended that the displaced Bikinis be moved again.

The Bikinis through their leader "King" Nata, as he was erroneously christened by romantically minded newsmen, accompanied by three leaders (alab) of Bikini, inspected Rongerik, Ujelal, Ujilang, Wotte and Ujelal to try to find a suitable place in which to relocate their people. The Bikini people were interested in getting back to their ancestral home as rapidly as possible, and had allegedly regarded the past and future resettlements as only temporary.

The period from June 2, 1947, to September 1, 1947, was spent in inspecting these possible resettlement areas. On August 26, 1947 the council of the ex-Bikini people on Rongerik sent the following letter to the American authorities:

(translation): "To the Office at Kwajalein:

Gentlemen: We the council have held a meeting to find the best place to go to. We have been to some other places to inspect and have considered them. In moving we find it quite a problem. The place we all agreed to stay on is Rongerik Atoll.

a/ We, The Council"

It was obvious that the Bikini leaders refused to accept the fact that they would not be allowed to return to Bikini some day, and for that reason preferred to suffer the hardships of neighboring Rongerik, to a new move, in the hope of being able to return to their ancestral home.
It was decided however, that the best interests of the Bikini people would be served by transferring them to Ujilang Atoll, the westernmost of the Marshalls. Ujilang belonged to the government, as heir to the Imperial Japanese government which had seized it from its former German owners who had "purchased" the tiny atoll from its former chief.

A group of Bikini men and Navy Seabees arrived at Ujilang in late November to prepare a village for another resettlement attempt. Shortly after their arrival, announcement was made that the atoll of Eniwetak, west of Bikini, and north of Ujilang would be commandeered as another testing ground for atomic weapons. It was then decided that the Eniwetak inhabitants would be resettled on Ujilang. This left the ex-Bikini people right where they were six months earlier, but undoubtedly with increased feelings of insecurity, frustration and general bewilderment.

In January of 1943 Anthropologist Leonard Mason of the University of Hawaii, made a field investigation of the problem at the request of the Navy. He found among other things that the relocated Bikinians were suffering serious hardships on Rongerik, and, despite a well organized communal organization, were not getting enough to eat. He recommended that the Bikini people be moved to another location.

Sojourn on Kwajalein

Upon the basis of Mason's investigation and recommendation, the ex-Bikinians were again moved to a temporary location on Kwajalein Island in the middle of March, 1943. Here, in a "tent city" in the midst of Marshallese workers from far and wide, as well as thousands of American military personnel, the wandering Bikinians waited the next move. Once again a tour of inspection was made of available and possible locations for resettlement. The possibilities finally narrowed down to Wotto Atoll which was populated, and the single island of Kili in the southern Marshalls. Kili was not populated and was U.S. government property.

The majority of the Bikini people allegedly voted for Kili as against Wotto, and in early November of 1943 the 184 Bikinians were transferred to Kili Island.²

²The increase in population was caused by the addition of Bikinians who had married out, plus their spouses and offspring.
Kili Island

The new home of the Bikini people is a low single coral island about one and one half miles long, on an axis of 063° true, and is approximately three-fourths of a mile wide at its widest point. The area is only 0.36 square miles in extent, with no lagoon area and a small fringing reef. This compares very unfavorably of course with the 2.32 square miles of dry land area, the 227.40 square miles of lagoon area, and the large reef areas of Bikini Atoll.

Kili was purchased by German traders from the local chiefs and was operated as a commercial copra plantation by the Germans. The title to the island was transferred to the Japanese Government when the Japanese seized the Marshalls in 1914. It was leased to a Japanese company and operated as a copra plantation until 1940. There were allegedly not more than about thirty Marshallese laborers working on the plantation at a time. Feed was brought in from Jaluit Atoll, about thirty miles to the southeast. Chickens and swine were raised to supplement the imported foodstuffs. A small number of breadfruit trees were planted and used, but the island was primarily a copra plantation. Kili passed into the hands of the United States Government following World War II, and the few remaining plantation workers were evacuated.

Kili, lying as it does in the southern Marshalls, enjoys a heavy rainfall and has rich and deep soil, for the Marshalls. Most of the islands 196.00 acres have been planted to coconut palms (191.17 acres.) A tree patch area occupies the center of the island to the extent of 4.25 acres. There are a number of bearing breadfruit trees, some edible pandanums, as well as bananas, papaya and pumpkin plantings.

Unfortunately, the lack of a lagoon or protected anchorage presents very serious problems to the inhabitants of Kili. The unfavorable axis of the island (063-210°) in relation to the prevailing northeast trade winds and the shelving, comparatively narrow reef, are factors which cause the island to be isolated during many months of the year. From December through March the equatorial front lies to

A serious breadfruit blight has destroyed many of the trees on Kili and remains unchecked. A method of controlling this menace has not yet been found.
the south, and northeasternly winds prevail. Landing conditions are therefore
generally unfavorable. From November into late March it is possible to get a boat
ashore only during a few very brief periods, due to the large breakers which
crash against the rocky beaches. Copra cannot be loaded and trade goods cannot
be off-loaded. These unfavorable surf conditions naturally prevent utilisation
of the important marine resources, which at best are infinitely poorer than
those of the atoll of Bikini.

The Resettlement on Kili

The ex-Bikini people apparently experienced difficulty in adjusting to
Kili from almost the very beginning. This was due in part to the different
ecological conditions. The change from an atoll existence where marine resources
were abundant, and the lagoon and land areas stretched away as far as the eye
could see, to a small, isolated island without a lagoon, and without the rich
marine resources which are found in an atoll environment, was drastic. The
psychological attitude toward Kili was and has continued to be of vital importance
in the lack of adjustment. The refusal to accept the move to Kili as final and
desirable has prevented a wholehearted attempt to adjust to the island.

The writer was closely involved with the former Bikini people during his
years of service as District Anthropologist in the Marshall Islands. He lived
on Kili for several prolonged periods and was able to see what life on Kili is
like. In his opinion the complaints of the ex-Bikini people on Kili are valid.
Conditions are certainly unfavorable. There are periods when the island is isolated
and the people are very short of food. There is no doubt that Kili could support
a smaller population, if the island could be supplied adequately from the outside
world. However, the only solution acceptable to the former Bikinians, as a whole,
is to return them to Bikini.
Attempts to Aid in the Adjustment Process

The Administration of the Trust Territory made various efforts to assist the relocated Bikinians to make a successful adjustment to Kili. A fifty foot schooner was purchased and turned over to the group. This was to be used to supply the island in addition to the regular field trip stops. The craft was soon lost in the surf due to mishandling by the inexperienced crew. A second craft was provided several years later. This was a great help, but was lost in a typhoon which swept through the southern Marshalls in December of 1957. Government land was provided for the use of the Kili people on the neighboring island of Jaluit. Several acres on Jalvor Island were used as a village area. Houses, a storehouse, and other structures were erected by the government. These were to be used by the members of the Kili boat crew, and others while the craft was anchored off Jalvor. Three smaller islands were provided from which the Kili residents of Jalvor could obtain coconuts, pandanus and other local foods. The typhoon wiped out the village on Jalvor and the few Kili people there left the atoll for good.

A community development project was set up to assist the Kili people to develop and exploit the resources of the island to the maximum. Handicraft production was stimulated. The production of the now famous Kili Bags has continued but other items are no longer made for export.

Attempts were made to exploit the large taro patch area as a source of food, and possibly cash income. Two taro lifts were made to Rusafe Island in the Ponape District. Large quantities of high quality taro plants were obtained and planted on Kili. It soon became obvious that the former Bikinians, to whom taro was a very minor and unimportant item, were not interested in cultivating this useful plant. It should be added that taro cultivation is becoming increasingly of less importance throughout the Marshalls, even in those areas in the southern Marshalls where taro once flourished. The taro patch itself was ruined during the typhoon of December 1957. Wave action flooded the area with salt water which killed the few plants which were left, and affected the fresh water lens.
The Community Development Project on Kili was terminated some time after the typhoon. It was not continued by the community as far as I knew.

Attempts by the Administration to obtain another location for the displaced Bikinians have been abortive.

The economic difficulties of the former Bikini people were alleviated when they were paid the sum of $325,000 by the Government in exchange for the use of Bikini Atoll. The interest from the trust fund into which $300,000 was placed, is a guaranteed income which helps the local economy. This will become less significant as the population increases, as it has since the fund was established in 1956.

Present Attitudes Toward Kili

The attitudes of Magistrate Judah, the leader of the Kili community and of other leading people of the community with whom I talked on Majuro, Majalain, and Eboyo in connection with the Bikini Atoll Survey, seemed to be unchanged. They still say that Kili is no good, it is like a prison, there is not enough food there and the like. The same objections which were made over a decade ago are still made. All of the people whom I interviewed stated that they wanted to return to Bikini to live. They were all very anxious about the survey and what the results would be in terms of their being allowed to return to Bikini or not.

However, I was also told that some of the people would want to be able to live on Kili, even if a return to Bikini is possible. None of those with whom I spoke said that this was their wish however. Apparently at least some of the former Bikinians have made an adjustment of sorts to Kili. I was also told, in connection with this, that even though some of the people wanted to live on Kili, everyone wants to go to Bikini first and see their home atoll.

In order to evaluate this properly one would have to interview the people now on Kili. This would be premature at this stage when the return of Bikini to its former inhabitants is not certain.
On the basis of my past experience with the former Bikinians, and my recent conversations and observations in the Marshalls, I believe that the majority of these people will want to return to Bikini. Those few who have established themselves on Majuro and Ebeye, with good jobs there may very well want to live away from Bikini at least during their working life. A few others may see the advantage of living on Kili as long as only a small number of people share the natural resources of that island with them. Bikini will undoubtedly still be the home base for all of these people however. An analogous situation can be seen in the populations of the other Marshallese communities.

This prediction is of course based upon the assumption that Bikini will be rehabilitated agriculturally, so that the people can make a living there.

The Political Situation

Decisions on the local level are made by the council of family heads and other males. The council is headed by Magistrate Jada, who is also the senior male of the Bikini group according to the traditional system. He is the heir of the local chiefs (iru'ij) of Bikini. The Bikini people were also traditionally subjects of a paramount chief (iru'ij lablab), whose ancestor had conquered Bikini over a century ago. The paramount chiefs of Bikini had never lived on the atoll but only visited it from time to time to collect tribute from their subjects. A percentage of the cash proceeds from copra production was collected during the Japanese period.

The Bikini people, in effect, declared their independence from the paramount chief shortly after their move from Bikini. They rejected him completely and declared that the U.S. Government was their paramount chief, and not the absentee title holder, whom they complained had never done anything to help them, but only exploited them. This has been the theme for the past twenty years.
On my last trip to the Marshalls I found that this attitude has not changed. They
want nothing to do with Iroij Lajoal. Kabua who holds the paramount chiefs rights
to Bikini according to the traditional Marshallese custom. The attitude of rejection
and refusal to accept him as their leader and spokesman has hardened, if anything,
after more than twenty years of independence. As I understand it, Lajoal continues
to maintain his claim to his hereditary rights in Bikini. This situation should
be kept in mind in planning for any future negotiations concerning Bikini.4

Bikini Atoll Today and Its Economic Potential

I will not go into details of the condition of Bikini today. These have been
covered in my daily log, and in Agriculturist James Miyane's final report of the
Bikini Survey. A few salient points should be made here however.

The coconut trees and other food bearing trees and plants have been almost
completely destroyed. Most of the islands have become overgrown with vegetation.

The potential agricultural areas will have to be cleared and completely re-
planted. This will be a formidable task which will extend over a long period of
time. Mr. Miyane has outlined a proposed program to accomplish this. I concur with
Miyane but think the scale of the program should be greater. All available areas
of the atoll should be cleared and planted as quickly as possible. This will
hasten the relocation of the exiled Bikinians on their home atoll, and in the
long run, will be more economical.

The large islands of Bikini, Enua, and Nami have the greatest economic potential.
They were the main copra producing islands, and main sources of vegetable foods in
the past. The smaller islands toward the southwest, such as Aerokoj and Enedik
were also valuable sources of copra and food plants in the past. Miyane reports
that the agricultural potential of the islands mentioned is good. Other smaller
islands and islets can also be developed later.

4 See Tobin, J.A. The Bikini People, Past and Present, Majuro, Marshall Islands,
October 1952, for more detailed information.
Unfortunately several of the islands have been completely destroyed or
ruined for agriculture as a result of the explosion of atomic weapons.

The smaller islands and islets in the atoll which were never used for
agricultural purposes will continue to provide birds and turtles and their eggs.

The surrounding reefs of these areas teem with fish and other marine fauna as
well. This is an extremely important factor in the local economy. It will be
anxious in the successful relocation of the former inhabitants of the atoll. The
abundance and variety of the marine fauna on Bikini is invariably central to
any discussion of that atoll by its former inhabitants. The rich natural
resources of Bikini are always compared with the unfavorable situation on Kili.

Several factors point to Enau Island as the most logical place to start the
agricultural-economic rehabilitation of the atoll. The final decision should however
be made only with the full concurrence of the Bikini people. All planning should
be done with the leaders of the group. This is not only equitable but it will avoid
problems after the people have returned to Bikini.

The excellent anchorages off Enau, Bikini, Nam and elsewhere in the atoll will
of course be crucial in the rehabilitation and economic stability of Bikini. The
lack of a protected anchorage, and the concomitant inability to load copra
aboard ship and send merchandise ashore have been extremely serious obstacles
to successful resettlement on Kili.

**Probable Pattern of Living on Bikini**

If the former Bikini people are returned to the atoll they will probably
follow much the same pattern of living as they did before the move. They will
undoubtedly want to live in the same village areas as before. The main village
was located on Bikini Island. This was the social and economic center of the atoll.

Settlements were also located on Enau, Nam and some of the other smaller islands.
The people will need houses, copra warehouses, school buildings, churches, and
the like. The leaders of the community with whom I have spoken, expect that the
U.S. government will provide these buildings, just as the Rongelap people and the
E~h

I believe that the Bikini people have become more oriented toward a cash economy since their removal from the atoll. This is especially true of those who have had to cope with the cash economy prevalent at Majuro and Ebeye. This means that they will probably be very much interested in copra production and will want to maximize the yield throughout the atoll. While this will aid in the rehabilitation program, and the eventual economic stability of Bikini, subsistence agriculture should not be neglected. Mr. Hiising is, of course, well aware of this aspect of the problem of agricultural rehabilitation.

As I have indicated previously, the Bikini people can be expected to make the maximum use of the local marine resources. Birds and turtles, and their eggs, fish and shellfish, and all other edible marine fauna will be eagerly sought. The tridacna and other large shellfish are especially prized by these people. The largest numbers
of these animals are said to have been found in the reef area of \textit{Gam} and continuing
down to the end of Bokbdlul Island and the tip of this long, continuous reef. This
includes the area from Bokbata Island to south of \textit{Gam} where large atomic blasts
occurred. Two islands were destroyed and a large area of the reef was blown out.
What effect this had on the shellfish population is unknown. It is logical to
assume that many of these creatures were killed either during the blasts or
as a result of the change in their environment after the blasts occurred. Another
important habitat for shellfish, especially \textit{tridacta} was said to have been the
reef area around the islands of \textit{Luk\j} and \textit{Jalet}e which lie to the southeast of
the previously mentioned area. These islands are also important as a source of
birds and their eggs, as well as turtles and turtle eggs.

The utilization of the smaller islands of the atoll will of course require
transportation. Some of them can be reached on foot from the neighboring 
marsh islands, but many of them are isolated and water transportation is necessary.

The relocatedes will need a number of large sailing canoes and smaller paddling
canoes. A small schooner, of the fifty foot type used throughout the Marshalls,
will probably also be needed to move between the large islands of the atoll. The
smaller craft are not able to carry much cargo. Adequate transportation for men,
materials, and ultimately copra, is an absolute necessity.

It is very difficult to estimate the degree of utilization of local vs.
imported foods. One can say however that the Bikini people will use imported
foods to a much greater degree than they did before they were moved from the
atoll. This, I believe is the trend throughout the Marshalls. It is seen in the
orientation toward a cash economy, based upon copra production. If the Bikinians
have the money they will purchase rice, flour and sugar, which have become staple
food items on \textit{Kili}, and elsewhere in the Marshalls. These, and other foodstuffs,
including coffee, tea, canned meats and canned fish, will be purchased in large
quantities. They form an important part of the diet, and cannot be considered to
be luxuries. I would imagine that the abundance of fish and shellfish on Bikini
would mean a reduction in the purchase of canned fish, and even canned meat. The domestic availability of pork and fowl locally would probably affect canned meat purchases.

The use of wildfowl and turtles would also probably mean a decrease in canned meat purchases. It should be noted that canned meats and fish are quite expensive in the Marshalls. These, and other consumer goods must be imported over vast distances. This is reflected in the cost to the consumer on the atolls.

The local foods such as arrowroot, pandanus, breadfruit, bananas and squash will undoubtedly be used in addition to imported foods. Arrowroot and pandanus were especially important and grew in large numbers on Bikini. Breadfruit and bananas were, I understand rare, as was taro. One can safely assume that if local foods are available the people will eat them, as well as imported foods. They enjoy both kinds of food and will not let any of it go to waste.

Although the Bikinians will want to visit all of the islands and islets in the atoll, and to exploit their natural resources, I believe that if any of these areas were found to be hazardous due to remaining radiation the people would comply with restrictions which would be necessary. This should be a matter of local policing by the community itself. A thorough explanation should be made to the entire community, so that the reasons for imposing such restrictions would be clearly understood and appreciated by everyone. This same procedure should apply to any restrictions against eating certain foods produced on Bikini.

The genetic pool of the Bikini people has changed since the move twenty years ago. Increased contact with other Marshallers has resulted in out marriages. It is probable that this trend will continue. There will probably be more travel between Bikini and other parts of the Marshalls. Enewetak and Majuro will be focal points for these movements, as will Kili, if people return there to live. There will probably be considerable travel between Bikini and neighboring Rongelap with whom a good number of the Bikini people have kinship ties. It can be expected that more of the young people will be absent from Bikini while attending school on Majuro, Ponape and elsewhere. These individuals will bring in new ideas, new ways of doing things, and in some cases, spouses from other groups.
I answered other related questions to the best of my ability, and the data available, when our survey group met on Kwajalein. As I indicated in my covering letter, some of the questions which were posed cannot be answered now. I will try to answer them when the data is available to me.

I hope that the information presented here will be useful in planning for the possible return of the former Bikini people to their home atoll.

Jack A. Tobin
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*Originally three islets, from west to east: Enidrik, Enidrikdrik, and Erdut.

**The name Enirikku has been found on a chart of unknown origin.