Department of Energy

Washington, DC 20585
July 28, 1998

The Honorable Daniel K. Akaka
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Senator Akaka:

Thank you for your letter of June 30, 1998, to Acting Secretary Elizabeth Moler concerning the Department of Energy's (DOE) use of land and facilities at Bikini Island in the Republic of the Marshall Islands and DOE's intentions to pay for certain infrastructure improvements by the Kili/Bikini/Ejit Local Government Council (the Bikini Council) at the Bikini Field Station.

We believe that DOE and the Bikini Council came to agreement on these issues last year as demonstrated by DOE's payment, in September 1997, of the Bikini Council's invoice for utilities ($45,050) and rent ($13,600) owed for the period May 1, 1996 (the date DOE turned over operation of the Bikini Field Station to the Bikini Council), through September 30, 1997, as well as the execution a new Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between DOE and the Bikini Council also in September 1997.

With respect to DOE's decision to establish an independent base of operations at Bikini, DOE initially contemplated continued, shared use of the Bikini Field Station for DOE's twice yearly month-long environmental monitoring missions. However, Bikini representatives, as well as the Council's commercial contractor, expressed a desire to use the Field Station on a year-round basis to generate additional tourism revenue. This, coupled with the Council's determination to charge tourist-level rates for DOE's occupancy of the Field Station, made clear the Field Station's continued dual use was not feasible.

Additionally, DOE spent $75,000 to set up living/support facilities for the use of Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory personnel during DOE's environmental missions, to accommodate both DOE's mission needs and the Council's commercial venture. The Department has also agreed, under the 1997 MOU, to pay the Bikini Council (1) $800/month to lease eight buildings and associated land at Bikini and (2) separate, negotiated fees for metered water and electricity use and fuel purchases.

DOE did not request the infrastructure improvements to the Field Station undertaken by the Council. The Department does not believe those renovations were necessary to accommodate DOE's environmental missions (see enclosure). The 1997 MOU, together with DOE's payments for rent and utility fees, was agreed upon by both parties last year as a satisfactory resolution of all outstanding issues. We look forward to continue working cooperatively with the Bikini Council and the Bikini people to achieve their goal of resettlement at Bikini.

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I hope this information is responsive to your concerns. If you require additional information, please contact Dr. Paul J. Seligman, Deputy Assistant Secretary for Health Studies, at (301)903-5926.

Sincerely,

Peter N. Brush
Acting Assistant Secretary
Environment, Safety and Health

Enclosures