

President of Marshall Islands Calls For Full U.S. Settlement

He's correct but it should be subtracted from the Pentagon budget. They are not doing much with their funding.

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"Fifty-two years after the U.S. Government unleashed the largest nuclear weapon ever tested in the Marshall Islands, we are a nation that is still striving to come to terms with our nuclear legacy," declared RMI President Kessai H. Note during a weekend visit to the island of Kili, one of the island where the people of Bikini were moved 60 years ago by the U.S. Military.

"We are reminded of not only the sacrifice and suffering of those affected by the testing but also of the strength and survival of our people in the face of that suffering," Mr Note continued. "I am honored to pay tribute to our survivors and to say that this Administration will not rest until the unmet needs of all those affected by the testing are addressed."

President and First Lady Note joined Bikini Senator Tomaki Juda and the Bikini Mayor and Council Members and the people of Bikini on Kili Island, over the weekend, in commemorating 60 years since they were moved from their home for U.S. nuclear testing purposes.

"I am interested in nothing less than full recovery for our people," Mr Note said. "That is why this Administration began work on a Changed Circumstances Petition when it came into office. That is why we submitted our Petition to the U.S. Congress in September 2000 describing our needs in detail. That is why we put these same issues on the table during the Compact negotiations.

"At the time, the U.S. Executive Branch refused to allow issues related to the U.S. nuclear weapons testing program to be included in our bilateral discussions because it determined that Congress would address the RMI's Changed Circumstances Petition. Therefore, we pushed and successfully testified at hearings in both the House and Senate. We have not allowed any setback to deter us. It is in the interest of full recovery that we have continued to make our case to the U.S. Government at every opportunity and by every avenue."

The President was speaking to over 100 people Friday afternoon during his first public address in Kili during his three-day visit.

"The most immediate needs are clear. Our Nuclear Claims Tribunal needs additional funding to pay off all personal injury awards and claims relating to property damage. There is a nuclear waste storage facility - Runit Dome - on Enewetak that must be monitored. Marshallese workers who worked at Bikini and Enewetak under the Trust Territory and those coping with cancers and other radiogenic illnesses urgently need improved healthcare options."

The President showed appreciation to U.S. Senator Lisa Murkowski's sponsorship of a bill that will include Marshallese in a U.S. worker's compensation program.

"We look to the U.S. Congress and the Administration to follow Senator Murkowski's lead in finding creative solutions to the real human needs that we face at home—in

these islands. We have already made a request to the U.S. Congress to increase funding for the 177 Health Care Program for fiscal year 2007 and to immediately implement a cancer detection and treatment program. We look to the Department of Energy, Interior and others in the U.S. Administration to support our request.

“It is time that the U.S. Government put words into action,” said President Note. “The U.S. Government constantly assures us that it appreciates that our sons and daughters serve in the U.S. armed services in Iraq and Afghanistan at a time when recruitment in the U.S. is down, our willingness to host the U.S. Army at the Ronald Reagan Ballistic Missile Testing Facility on Kwajalein Atoll, and our strong support of the United States and Israel at the United Nations as demonstrated by the RMI’s voting record. We are pleased to be your ally, but no friend likes to be taken for granted; the time has come for action, and our requests for healthcare to assist those injured by U.S. activities must be addressed.

“This is the time for leadership. This is the time for our friends and allies in the US to be courageous in their decisions, creative in their solutions, and compassionate in their support. The people of the Marshall Islands deserve no less.”