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New Blasts Delay Eniwetok Return

PO 6/25/72

ENIWETOK'S gentle natives, who have been waiting 26 years to go back to their nuclear-scorched island, will have to wait a while longer.

U.S. authorities haven't bothered to tell them that their precious atoll, already ripped apart by 30 nuclear tests, will be battered again by 21 secret, new bomb blasts. Thousands of tons of TNT will be used to simulate nuclear explosions on Eniwetok.

The natives were evacuated from their tiny atoll—less than 3 square miles of coral in the vast Pacific—back in 1946. They were shipped to the neighboring island of Ujelang, a spot so barren it was inhabited only by hardy rats.

For a quarter of a century, the islanders have been battling the rats for the sparse copra harvest, longing for the day they can go home. Lately, seven of their leaders were permitted to pay their first visit in 26 years to Eniwetok.

They found three of its outlying islets had been vaporized by nuclear blasts. Ugly craters still marred the landscape. Yet they returned excitedly to Ujelang to tell families and friends that their homeland would soon be habitable again.

The Pentagon roused their hopes by promising a possible return in 1973.

But all the while, the Defense Nuclear Agency was sending hush-hush military missions to Eniwetok to prepare for the new TNT tests.

Unknown to the islanders, heavy equipment was moved in, and several acres were bulldozed. The military, however, neglected to file an advance statement on the potential ecology damage as required by the new environmental laws.

When they belatedly got around to filing a statement, they violated the law again by omitting the views of the natives about the upcoming destruction.

Poverty lawyers have now

volunteered to assist the islanders, who are largely illiterate. In their behalf, a counter-statement has just been filed complaining that the new tests will prolong their enforced odyssey.

The statement also charges that the blasts will stir up deadly, latent radiation which, along with cyanide from the bombs, will poison the atoll water supply. It is also alleged that the TNT will rip one offshore islet in half, wreck a vital coral reef, destroy fish and scare off birds.

Footnote: The Defense Department explained that the

tests must be held at Eniwetok, because comparisons must be with the earlier nuclear tests. Few stateside Americans, however, would tolerate the bombs in their own backyards without a fierce outcry.

FBI Fiction

ONE REASON the FBI

likes to cite "confidential sources" is because their information often is little more than gossip. The veil of anonymity, therefore, protects the FBI as much as it does its sources.

The file on Muhammad Ali, for example, discloses an incident attributed to a "source" who has furnished reliable information in the past.

The "confidential source" quoted Walter Turner, a "self-described public relations man" for the Black Muslims, to the effect that Ali's managers were allegedly negotiating a title match with boxer Jimmy Ellis.

At the time, Ali was being ostracized by professional boxing organizations because he had refused to be drafted. Ellis was recognized by the World Boxing Association as the heavyweight champion.

The alleged scheme called for Ali and Ellis to fight in a Miami television studio and thereby "circumvent boxing commission bars concerning Clay's boxing."

The entire deal, according to the FBI's "source," was being arranged by a prominent sports announcer.

—of the Company's television station in New York City is alleged to be negotiating this title match," wrote an agent in the FBI's Chicago field office, "and, if all goes as planned (the announcer) will receive \$50,000 for his efforts."

We spoke to the sportscaster, who denounces the alleged incident as "a joke" and "a farce."

A representative for Muhammad Ali, New York attorney Robert Arum, claimed the allegation "is a pipe dream."

Walter Turner, the Muslim PR man quoted by the FBI's "source," told us he remembered the story but said it was "a joke."

"Ali was kidding around about not being able to fight," Turner said. "All in joking he said he'd even fight on a television studio."

Further investigation has failed to turn up a shred of evidence that the FBI memo is accurate. Yet it is faithfully recorded in FBI files, without the slightest hint that it is more like fiction than fact.