

Belau

Striving for a Nuclear-Free Future



Photo by Douglas Faulkner

Belau, an island country in the Western Pacific, is the home of 15,000 people. To some, Belau is a tropical paradise. The luxuriant, jungle vegetation of its 200 volcanic and limestone islands attracts naturalists from throughout the world. Tourists are drawn to Belau's sandy white beaches, ringed by one of the richest coral reefs on earth.

To others, Belau is a battleground. World War II brought to Belau (formerly Palau) some of the fiercest battles between the United States and Japan. Tens of thousands of Japanese, Americans, and Belauans were killed there. Although one hun-

dred years ago Belau's population was 50,000, 10,000 had survived by 1945.

To the Belauans, however, the islands are simply their home, and they are determined that their people must never again suffer from foreigners' wars. The fertile land gives them taro, coconut, bananas, and other crops in abundance. The immense, rich fishing grounds surrounding Belau's shores have always been the lifeblood of the people and their culture. For 3000 years, the land and the sea have sustained the Belauans. Their home is a sacred trust they are determined to preserve.

U.S. Nuclear Bases Planned

The Belauan people, like native peoples throughout the world, have long endured colonial pressures. From the sixteenth century until 1945, the people were under a succession of foreign rulers: Spain, Germany, and Japan. As part of the spoils of the Pacific War, the United States has ruled Belau and the rest of Micronesia since 1947, when the islands became a U.S.-administered United Nations Strategic Trust Territory.

The Belauans are now struggling against the greatest threat to their survival they have ever faced. Although the U.N. agreement mandates that the U.S. prepare the Belauans for self-government or independence, the islanders are instead confronted with U.S. plans to use their home as part of a massive military build-up in the Pacific: almost one-third of Belauan land is to be taken for U.S. military bases.

Second, the U.S. plans to use 2000 acres for the storage of munitions, presumably including nuclear weapons, for use in the Asia-Pacific theatre. Third, the runway at Belau's airport is to be extended to accommodate the probable introduction of anti-submarine (ASW) planes; the U.S. strategic advantage in ASW cripples Soviet retaliatory capability, thereby increasing the likelihood of a U.S. first strike.

Preparing for Intervention

The Pentagon also wants 30,000 acres of Belauan land for a jungle warfare training area. In U.S. military planning, Belauan bases would be useful not only in preparing for strategic nuclear warfare, but also in protecting U.S. interests in the Asia-Pacific region. Since the U.S. withdrawal from Vietnam, Micronesia has taken on a new importance as a potential "springboard" for U.S.

friendly governments against internal opposition. The strategic importance of the Western Pacific was emphasized by former Secretary of Defense James Schlesinger, when in 1973 he declared: "The region not only surrounds the access routes to Guam, but also those to the Near East, and our sources of Asian raw materials can be controlled from Micronesia."

In recent testimony before Congress, the Commander-in-Chief of U.S. Pacific Forces emphasized the continuing interventionist mission of the U.S. military in the region. The commander, Admiral Robert Long, stated that strategic nuclear exchange "is not the most likely" scenario; rather, he predicted, "the trouble is much more likely to come in the form of conventional clashes at the regional and local level" in Southeast and Southwest Asia.

In order to prepare troops for such warfare, the U.S. wants Belau to accept the giant jungle warfare training area, which some military analysts suggest would serve the same counterinsurgency goals as the U.S. Army School of the Americas in Panama (soon to be closed). In Panama, thousands of military officers from the dictatorships of Latin America have been trained in the techniques of repression.

The munitions storage area planned for Belau may be a site for the storage of chemical weapons, as well as tactical nuclear weapons intended for use in local conflicts.

"Who Gives a Damn?"

In all, U.S. preparations for nuclear war and military intervention would claim fifty square miles, nearly one-third of Belauan territory—a land-grab which in itself constitutes a U.S. military invasion. Although the U.S. insists that it is defending the Belauans from outside aggression, it is actually sacrificing the very survival of the Belauan people to U.S. expansionist strategies. The presence of important U.S. military facilities would make Belau a certain target of attack in the event of superpower conflict, once again involving the people in a war which is not of their making.

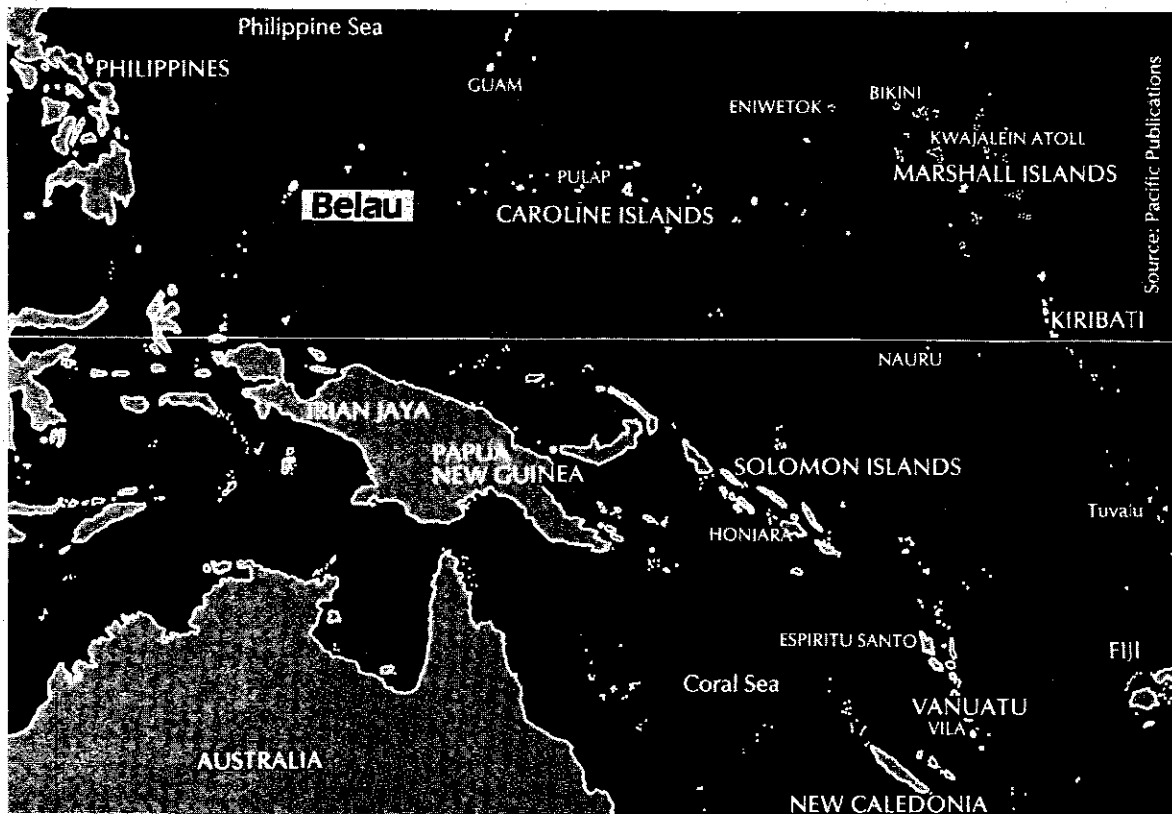
Such disregard for the survival of



These plans are part of the larger U.S. strategy to obtain first-strike capability against the Soviet Union. First, the United States Navy wants forty acres of land adjacent to Belau's deep-water harbor. According to Robert Aldridge, a military analyst who used to design Trident missiles for Lockheed, the area is expected to be a forward base for the Trident submarine—one of the many new first-strike weapons soon to be deployed.

intervention in Asia and the Middle East. The major economic powers in the Western Pacific, the United States and Japan, have billions of dollars worth of trade and investment to safeguard, and both depend upon the region as a vital source for raw materials.

Bases in Micronesia could serve an important role in supplying U.S. Rapid Deployment Force operations in the Western Pacific and the Indian Ocean, as the U.S. acts to shore up



the native population has long characterized U.S. policy towards Micronesia. As former Secretary of State Henry Kissinger once remarked, "There's only 90,000 Micronesians out there. Who gives a damn?"

When they made their plans for Belau, United States officials no doubt expected little resistance from the country's tiny population. Belau-an demands for self-determination, however, and increasing international support for the burgeoning Nuclear-Free Pacific movement, have impeded the efforts of U.S. policymakers to execute the military's plans.

In response, U.S. negotiators have again invoked the well-worn "Soviet threat." William Bodde, Jr., a U.S. envoy to the Pacific, recently described U.S. efforts to "do everything possible" to counter the Nuclear-Free Pacific movement. Bodde declared:

We must convince our friends in the region that a "nuclear-free Pacific" could change the balance of power with the Soviets to our disadvantage and thereby endanger world peace. It will not be an easy task, but it is not one that we can afford to neglect.

(Honolulu Advertiser, Feb. 11, 1982)

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The Compact of "Free" Association. . .

The mechanism by which the U.S. hopes to militarize Belau is through a "Compact of Free Association" and its subsidiary agreements, negotiated between Belauan officials and the State Department. Each of the four sections of Micronesia (the Northern

Marianas, the Federated States of Micronesia, the Marshall Islands, and Belau) is negotiating separately with the U.S. for an arrangement to end the U.N. Trust Territory Agreement—the last U.N. trusteeship remaining anywhere in the world.

Since the Kennedy Administration, the U.S. State Department has been laying the groundwork for permanent control of Micronesia. The Solomon Report, prepared in 1963, predicted that continuance of the U.N. Trust Territory Agreement "could become more than embarrassing." U.S. objectives were then clearly outlined:

Micronesia is not now United States territory; we wish it to become so. To accomplish this we must convince the United Nations that a measure of self-government will be given. (Emphasis added.)

That "measure of self-government" is contained in the Compact of Free Association. Belau would "control" its internal affairs, and in return for \$5.5 million for the first fifteen years (less after that), the people are to give up one-third of their land to U.S. bases. In addition, the Compact grants the U.S. exclusive responsibility for the security and defense of the country for 50 years.

... Or a Nuclear-Free Constitution

In preparation for a change in political status, the Belauan people drafted their first constitution in 1979. Much to the dismay of U.S. officials, the Constitution included provisions asserting total sovereignty over Belauan territory. The most powerful element of their new constitution—and that which the U.S. found most offensive—forbids the detonation, storage, testing, use, or disposal of nuclear materials and chemical weapons in Belau.

“Micronesia is not now United States territory; we wish it to become so.”

By a vote of 92 percent, the people approved the world's first anti-nuclear constitution in July, 1979. The United States responded with haste, pressuring the Belauan legislature to invalidate the constitution. U.S. lawyers were then brought in to help draft a new constitution, and a second referendum was called for October, 1979.

Belauan anti-nuclear activists charge that the U.S. expended over \$100,000 in bribes, but they emphasize that these tactics didn't sway the people's determination—the U.S.-drafted constitution was rejected by 69 percent of the people. As one anti-nuclear organizer explained, “It was hard for us to tell our people not to accept the money, so we told them to accept the money and reject the U.S. version of the constitution.”

In July, 1980, the Belauan people had a third opportunity to vote for the original nuclear-free constitution, and once again, with a vote of 78 percent in favor, they let Washington know that the American military and its nuclear weapons will not be welcome on their islands. A long history of colonization brings many lessons to the Belauan people, one of which is aptly expressed in a common axiom: “When soldiers come, war comes.”

On the Road to Belau

The confrontation between the United States and the Belauan people remains unresolved. In 1981, the country was proclaimed the Republic of Belau, but U.S. control under the U.N. Trusteeship continues; State Department officials have no intention of relinquishing their “trust” until the Compact can be instituted. Despite the overwhelming support for the nuclear-free constitution, U.S. officials are pressing forward with their plans for the bases.

A referendum on the Compact is expected for 1983, after all negotiations are complete. The negotiations have been “completely U.S. dominated,” according to observers, and conspicuously few details of the Compact have been revealed to the public. Unfortunately, there is a loophole in the Constitution which allows the Compact to supersede the provisions of the Constitution with simple majority approval of the electorate.

Quite literally, the U.S. is “preparing the way” for the militarization of Belau. After years of U.S. neglect of Belau's infrastructure, the Navy's Construction Battalion is now building roads into remote areas of Belau's interior. Even more revealing is the name—“Palau Road”—given to the main road at the Trident's only base in Puget Sound, Washington. On the way towards its military build-up in the Pacific, the Pentagon remains determined not to allow the Belauan people to obstruct its path.

Democracy Ignored

The Belauan people, however, have shown even more determination to protect their islands, and after three referenda they know now that a nuclear-free future will not come easily. As one Belauan organizer remarked, “It is from the Americans that we learned democratic processes, and now that we are practicing democracy the Americans ignore it.” As the time of the Compact referendum draws nearer, Belauan leaders expect U.S. pressure to intensify.

Strange events on the islands have

led many observers to suspect that covert operations are part of the U.S. effort to undermine Belauan anti-nuclear sentiment. In September, 1981, a strike of one-quarter of the government workers, led by pro-U.S. senators, resulted in the bombing of the house of the President, a supporter of the nuclear-free Constitution. According to Robert Aldridge, who conducted a fact-finding visit after the strike, the strikers also cut off contact with the outside world by occupying the communications center. Belauan police, who are under U.S. command, assisted the strikers.

Even more significantly, U.S. officials in Guam offered to send in Marines. As Aldridge concludes, the “riot was obviously provoked by outside interests,” which were attempting to “set the stage for a U.S. presence.” Fortunately, this effort to undermine the Belauan government failed, and President Haruo Remeliik was able to restore order on his own. The possibility of future outside subversion, however, remains a continuing threat to Belauan democracy.

International Support is Critical

Since the United Nations must approve the termination of the Trusteeship Agreement, any change in the political status of Belau will have to face international scrutiny. International support, therefore, is especially critical as Belauans fight for their right to self-determination.

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Religious groups see a special significance in the struggle of the
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 Belauan people, who have shown such a powerful and righteous determination to make their islands independent and nuclear-free. For centuries, the Belauan people have practiced a reverent stewardship over their land and waters. Belau's traditional religion teaches that the land and the sea are the Mother of the people, and the people's history teaches that military occupation will bring only destruction to their islands. Throughout the world, religious organizations are playing an increasingly important role in supporting the Pacific peoples as they confront the international nuclear build-up.

Unfortunately, it is not only the

United States which has plans to violate Belauan land and waters: despite vehement Belauan objections, the Japanese government has proposed to dump nuclear wastes near Belau. Such dumping would pollute the waters surrounding Belau for generations to come.

As Isaiah has written of the enemies of Israel, so could the Belauans describe the U.S. military and the Japanese government:

their schemes are schemes of mischief and leave a trail of ruin and devastation. They do not know the way to peace, no justice guides their steps; . . . Therefore justice is far away from us, right does not reach us. (Isaiah 59:7-9)

The 15,000 Belauans, confronted

by the military of the world's most powerful nation, must depend upon international support to protect their home from U.S. intervention.

The Belauans have learned that "justice is far away," and only by building a worldwide network of support for the Nuclear-Free Pacific movement can they succeed in blocking the "trail of ruin and devastation" and lead the "way to peace." Foreign powers are risking the survival of the Belauan people. As one Belauan leader has warned, "If the Japanese take our water for dumping and the U.S. takes our land for the military base, our people will have no place to go for food and we will starve to death."

Resource Guide

The following organizations are among the groups involved in nuclear-free Pacific support work:

- Pacific Concerns Resource Center, Box 27692, Honolulu, Hawaii 96827. The center of the Nuclear-Free Pacific movement, organized by representatives from throughout the Pacific. The PCRC publishes a regular bulletin.
- Micronesia Support Committee, 1212 University Ave., Honolulu, Hawaii 96826. The committee publishes the *Micronesia Support Committee Bulletin*.
- Pacific Conference of Churches, P.O. Box 208, Suva, Fiji. The conference has recently published a resource entitled *A Call to a New Exodus: An Anti-Nuclear Primer for Pacific People*.

Action Suggestions

- Educate yourself. Write one of the groups listed in the Resource Guide for more information.
- Educate others. Make sure that nuclear-free Pacific issues are raised at local forums on the nuclear arms race, U.S. intervention in the Third World, the struggles of indigenous peoples, and environmental problems. Promote opportunities for speakers to discuss the concerns of the Nuclear-Free Pacific and Asian disarmament movements.
- Write letters to administration and Congressional officials. Express your support for Belau's nuclear-free constitution and the right of Belauans to determine their own future. Let Washington know that you oppose U.S. military build-up in the Pacific and support a nuclear-free Pacific!

- Jishu-Koza, 1-3-7 Mukogaoka, Bunkyo-ku, Tokyo, Japan 113, publishers of *Han-Genpatsu News* (Anti-Nuke News Japan).
- Focus on Micronesia Coalition, 475 Riverside Dr., Room 616, New York, N.Y. 10115. An ecumenical coalition of representatives from both Protestant denominations and Catholic orders, concerned with issues of economic development, human rights, and the militarization of Micronesia.
- The Bay Area Coalition for a Nuclear-Free Pacific, 2118 8th St., Berkeley, CA 94102. The coalition has produced a useful pamphlet entitled "Palau: Can It Stand Up to the U.S.?"
- Clergy and Laity Concerned, 198 Broadway, New York, N.Y. 10038. An interfaith national network of 42 chapters and affiliates, publishers of *CALC Report*.

In addition to writing your own congressional representatives, send letters to any or all of the following:

Fred M. Zeder
 Office For Micronesian Status Negotiations
 State Department
 Washington, D.C. 20520

James Watt
 Secy. of the the Interior
 Department of Interior
 Washington, D.C. 20240
 (The Department of the Interior administers the Micronesian Trust Territory.)

Senator S. I. Hayakawa
 Subcommittee on East Asia and the Pacific
 U.S. Senate
 Washington, D.C. 20510

Representative Stephen Solarz
 Subcommittee on Asian and Pacific Affairs
 U.S. House of Representatives
 Washington, D.C. 20515

- Join Clergy and Laity Concerned, an action network of chapters all around the country working for disarmament, human rights, and social justice. Send \$20 individual membership (\$7 limited income/student) to CALC, 198 Broadway, Rm 302, New York, NY 10038.

Additional copies of this brochure are available for 20¢ each, 50 or more 18¢ each. Please add 20% postage on all orders.

Special thanks to Paul Hutchcroft

Clergy and Laity Concerned 198 Broadway Rm 302 New York, NY 10038

(212) 964-6730

Confronting a Nuclear Pacific

The Movement for a Nuclear-Free Pacific

Since the end of World War II, the islands of the Pacific have given vital support for nuclear weapons development. On August 6, 1945, the U.S. bomber *Enola Gay* took off from Tinian in the Northern Marianas, and dropped the atomic bomb on the people of Hiroshima. From that initial use of nuclear weaponry until today—when thousands of nuclear warheads are deployed throughout the world—the Pacific Islanders have continually been the victims of the nuclear and military strategies of larger powers.

The people of the Marshall Islands, in eastern Micronesia, became the first victims. In 1946, the U.S. military governor visited the islands, and proclaimed to the people that American scientists were experimenting with nuclear weapons "for the good of mankind and to end all world wars." In the detonation of at least sixty-six nuclear bombs in the 1940s and 1950s, some islands were literally wiped off the face of the map.

The Marshallese, treated as guinea pigs by the American military, continue to suffer from their exposure to high levels of radioactive fallout. Even while many have become afflicted with cancer, the U.S. government still attempts to prevent residents from understanding the problems of radiation sickness. It remains impossible for residents to return to some of their home islands; one island, Bikini, remains off-limits for at least another half a century.

U.S. nuclear weapons testing in the Pacific ended in the early 1960s, but was replaced with the testing of nuclear weapons delivery systems, also in the Marshalls. The people of Kwajalein were evicted from their homes in 1964 so that their island, the largest atoll/lagoon in the world, could be used as a target for long-range missiles fired from California, 4700 miles away.

Today, Kwajalein is vital to the development of the nuclear arms race, since it is the only U.S. facility available for the testing of new weapons systems such as the MX, the Trident, and the

Minuteman III. Sacrificed for the cause, the 8000 people of Kwajalein are crowded onto 66 acres on nearby Ebeye—existing in some of the worst poverty found anywhere in the Pacific Islands.

The U.S. government considers the Pacific a vital strategic preserve in many other ways as well. In Tinian, north of Belau, large tracts of fertile land have been set aside for an Air Force base. Some

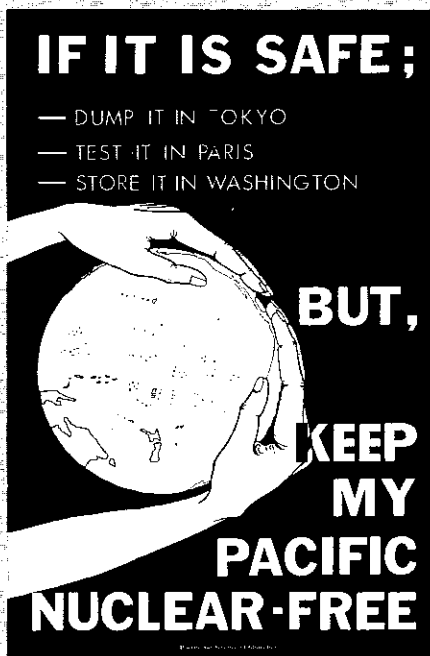
the testing leads to more than 40 cancer cases each year among the native population. Despite continuing protests from the people, the French have made no concessions, other than to switch from atmospheric to underground testing in 1975. Nonetheless, underground testing causes destruction to both the environment and to the health of the Polynesian people as well.

The Japanese, who have accumulated more than 200,000 55-gallon drums of nuclear wastes from their expanding nuclear power program, are looking to the Pacific to dump their radioactive garbage. The Japanese government's Science and Technology Agency has proposed disposing of the wastes between Japan and the Northern Marianas, and Japanese scientists have even been dispatched to try to convince the Micronesians that the proposed dumping would not harm them.

The people of the Pacific, however, cannot be so easily persuaded. "If it is safe," they inquire, "why don't you dump it in Tokyo?" Polynesians ask the French to test their bombs in Paris; Micronesians demand that the U.S. take their nuclear weapons back to Washington. Throughout the Pacific—in churches, trade unions, and community groups—support is growing for an end to nuclear waste dumping, nuclear bomb testing, and nuclear weapons storage and deployment.

Today, the Nuclear-Free Pacific movement is gaining increasing support around the world, as churches, trade unions, and disarmament and human rights organizations are supporting the right of Pacific Islanders to a nuclear-free future.

The success of the movement would be a victory not only for the Pacific peoples, but also for the cause of nuclear disarmament internationally. The worldwide peace movement will achieve a major breakthrough when the Pacific—a region vital to the development and basing of nuclear weapons—can become truly pacific again.



of the Pentagon's most important strategic nuclear weapons, the B-52 long-range bombers and Polaris and Poseidon submarines, are based in Guam, a U.S. territory. In addition, the Navy depends upon its strategic forces having transit through the Pacific, and military analysts expect the Western Pacific and the Indian Ocean to become more important areas for the deployment of U.S. submarine-launched nuclear missiles.

The French and the Japanese governments are also active in the Pacific. Even now, the French test nuclear weapons in their Polynesian colony, where over seventy nuclear bombs have been detonated since the early 1960s. According to an independent French study,