

# Nuclear Contamination on Kalama Atoll

## CLEAN-UP or COVER-UP?

### Kalama Occupied

Kalama (Johnston) Atoll is located approximately 717 miles southwest of O'ahu. The U.S. claimed Kalama (Johnston) in 1898 when it took possession of the Philippines, Guam, Puerto Rico and Hawai'i.

During the Cold War, the U.S. conducted at least 67 atomic and nuclear tests in the Pacific, including a series of tests at Kalama Atoll. Kalama was also a storage site for chemical and nuclear weapons and Agent Orange.

Between 1990 and 2000 the Army incinerated chemical weapons on Kalama, a program that is currently in its closure phase. The Air Force will begin to clean up PCB and Agent Orange contamination before final closure of the military base in 2004.

### Nuclear Disaster Area

In 1962 four failed nuclear missile launches from Kalama contaminated the atoll and reefs with plutonium. Some of the plutonium-contaminated soil and coral was dumped in the lagoon or shipped to the Nevada Test Site for disposal. Other contaminated debris was dumped into the ocean.

### Nuclear Dump Proposed

The Defense Threat Reduction Agency (DTRA) proposes to bury the remaining pile of contaminated soil and debris in an unlined coral pit on Kalama. DTRA plans to leave radioactive "hot spots" buried beneath the surface.

Plutonium is extremely toxic if ingested or inhaled, even in small amounts. It remains hazardous for a long time; the half-life of Plutonium is 24,000 years.

Kalama is very low and exposed to storms and tsunamis. Due to the heavy human alteration of the geography, the island is extremely prone to erosion. DTRA's own report estimates that the sea wall could fail within 30-50 years, and that once this happens, the landfill would be breached, releasing the radioactive contents into the environment.

### Other Agencies Reject Landfill

In 1991, the Defense Nuclear Agency rejected the landfill option because it did not remove the contaminant from the environment and would require perpetual monitoring. In 1995 the Department of Energy recommended that transuranic waste be "permanently isolated from the environment and people." Most recently, the EPA expressed concerns about burying plutonium on Kalama. DTRA is selecting burial because it is the cheapest option.



*Nuclear accident: a Thor missile explodes on the launch pad, July 25, 1962.*

**Don't short change our health or our environment. Write letters to the editor. Contact Congress. CALL FOR STEPS TO**

**ENSURE THAT THE MILITARY CLEANS UP ITS MESS!**

### Senator Daniel Inouye

Tel: (202) 224-3934 or (808) 541-2542; Fax: (202) 224-6747; Email: senator@inouye.senate.gov

### Senator Daniel Akaka

Tel: (202) 224-6361 or (808) 522-8970; Fax: (202) 224-2126; Email: senator@akaka.senate.gov

### U.S. Representative Patsy Mink

Tel: (202) 225-4906 or (808) 541-1986; Fax: (202) 225-4987 or (808) 538-0233; Email: <http://www.house.gov/writerep/>

### U.S. Representative Neil Abercrombie

Tel: (202) 225-2726 or (808) 541-2570; Fax: (202) 225-4580 or (808) 533-0133; Email: Neil.Abercrombie@mail.house.gov

To review DTRA's proposal and reports see their website: [http://www.dtra.mil/news/nw\\_index.html](http://www.dtra.mil/news/nw_index.html) or call (703) 325-7174.

Get Involved! Contact: Kyle Kajihiro, American Friends Service Committee Hawai'i. 2426 O'ahu Avenue, Honolulu, Hawai'i 96822 Tel.: (808) 988-6266; Fax: (808) 988-4876; Email: [kkajihiro@afsc.org](mailto:kkajihiro@afsc.org)

# NO NUCLEAR LANDFILL ON KALAMA!