



## Press Release

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### **DEFENCE CONTRACT AWARD AFFIRMS BRITAIN'S COMMITMENT TO PACIFIC ISLAND OF KIRITIMATI**

Defence Estates (DE), on behalf of the Ministry of Defence (MOD), has awarded the contract for the removal of residual military equipment from the Pacific Island of Kiritimati to SEC Ltd of Newcastle-upon-Tyne, England, who have previously worked for DE under their former name of MB Holdings. The award reaffirms the British Government's commitment to undertake remediation work following on from its use of the island for nuclear bomb testing in the late 1950's and early 1960's.

Whilst the majority of the facilities constructed for the tests were removed in the 1960's, the work covered by this contract will consist of the removal of rusting vehicles, equipment and steel drums, as well as limited quantities of asbestos and luminised dials from the island. Whilst the presence of this equipment is unsightly, there is no evidence to suggest that it has had a detrimental effect on the environment. The work is expected to take approximately 16 months, at a cost of around £8 million and will be project managed on behalf of the MOD by ENVIROS Ltd who were appointed in April 2004.

The scrap metal will be transported to a suitable facility where it will be recycled for steel production, while the asbestos and luminised dials will be returned to the UK for safe and secure storage. All the equipment will be transported in accordance with UK and Government of Kiribati regulations relating to the transport of waste materials. The UK regulations reflect international standards and are designed to have levels of safety which accord with the quantity of material transported. The MOD is wholly funding the project, which will include the appointment of a local project liaison officer by the Kiribati Ministry of the Environment, Land and Agriculture Development who will represent the islanders' interests.

The Pacific Island of Kiritimati, formerly known as Christmas Island, comprises part of the Republic of Kiribati. A Memorandum of Understanding was signed in November 2003 between the Kiribati and British Governments within which it was agreed that MOD would facilitate and fund the project.

#### **Notes to Editors**

1. Defence Estates is an Executive Agency of the Ministry of Defence. On 1 April 2003 it was relaunched with enhanced responsibilities for managing the defence estate as a corporate asset and for the delivery of estate maintenance, works and services.
2. Tenders for the Contract were submitted by SEC Ltd, EMR Ltd and Shanks Ltd. Cleanaway were also invited to tender but elected not to submit a bid.
3. The waste to be removed from the island of Kiritimati includes limited quantities of asbestos containing material, tar and bitumen drums, scrap vehicles, rubber, radium-luminised dials, batteries and gas cylinders.
4. Up until the late 1960's radium was commonly used in civilian and defence use as a component of luminous paint for use on vehicle dials, compasses, clock faces, radio dials and other items.
5. Enviros Ltd, are Consulting Engineers with significant experience of working for DE on other environmental projects, as well as being 'term commission' consultants for the Agency.

#### **Further information:**

Press enquiries to Defence Estates on 0121 311 3861/ 2046 / 3850

Defence Estates website: <http://www.defence-estates.mod.uk>

Ministry of Defence website address: <http://www.mod.uk>