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## **Press Release - Muskie Criticizes Cannikin Decision**

Edmund S. Muskie

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# MUSKIE

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Immediately FOR RELEASE

October 27, 1971

## MUSKIE CRITICIZES CANNIKIN DECISION

Senator Edmund S. Muskie (D-Me.) issued the following statement today:

I regret the President's decision to proceed with the Cannikin nuclear test on Amchitka Island, Alaska. The test is unnecessary. And it is possibly dangerous. This is apparently a case of bureaucratic momentum overwhelming those in the government who have argued that the doubtful military benefits of the test do not justify the environmental risks to those who live in Alaska, Hawaii and the West Coast -- not to mention our friends in Canada, Japan and other areas of the Pacific.

The Cannikin project will test a five-megaton warhead designed for the long-range Spartan ABM missile. This missile was designed for area defense, a concept already rejected by Congress, and is not even the missile that would necessarily be utilized for ABM defense of our land-based missile sites.

The risk of a major environmental catastrophe, such as an earthquake or tidal wave, is admittedly very slight -- but cannot be entirely ruled out. More likely is possible venting or leakage of radioactive materials into the immediate environment -- the consequences of which are unpredictable.

There have been reliable reports that certain departments and agencies in the Executive Branch have given negative recommendations on the test. I am dismayed that the White House has refused to release for public consideration the unclassified portions of the recommendations -- both pro and con. I think the people affected by Cannikin ought to be able to review the judgments of experts on the risks involved.

When Congress set the requirement that the President must personally make the final decision on Cannikin, many of us hoped that he would intervene to stop the momentum that had been building behind this project. I am sorry that he has refused to do so. Since we now must explode this giant warhead of doubtful utility, we can only pray that it will not cause any harm.