



UNITED STATES
DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
OFFICE OF TERRITORIES
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20240

January 18, 1966

Memorandum

To: Secretary
Under Secretary
Assistant Secretary Anderson

From: Director, Office of Territories

Subject: Political Status of the Trust Territory

On January 17 I met with Eugenie Anderson, to discuss essentially the question whether the time is now upon us to hold a plebiscite in the Trust Territory, looking toward its becoming a part of the United States. She feels strongly that it is. It is her view that the strategic importance of the area is so acute, and so likely to become more so, that the Trust Territory's current, somewhat ambiguous status should be brought to an end. She believes that a vote held soon will surely bring a large pro-U.S. association vote, and that as time passes, that vote is likely to grow smaller. She also believes that a plebiscite, followed by a new status for the Trust Territory as a part of the U.S., can be squared with the UN.

I am enthusiastic about taking steps as soon as possible to regularize the Trust Territory's status. In my view Interior's job of economic and political development will be greatly assisted by terminating the trust status. Further, I agree with Mrs. Anderson that the longer we delay holding a plebiscite, the less favorable (in terms of US association) the result is likely to be.

I write to tell you these things now because:

- (a) Mrs. Anderson has discussed this matter with the Vice-President, and expects that she will soon (perhaps today) see the President to urge this course;
- (b) She expects, in the company of Assistant Secretary of State Sisco, to call upon Secretary Udall next week, when this subject is likely to come up;
- (c) Mr. Sisco and others from State will meet on January 19 with Messrs. Carver and Anderson and others from Interior, and we can anticipate a discussion of this subject; and

(d) On January 25 and 26, the full House Interior Committee will meet in Executive Session to discuss any and all aspects of territorial policy and administration. Mrs. Anderson and I have been invited to attend. I look forward to these sessions as providing an opportunity to learn the willingness of the Committee to take the steps necessary to accept the Trust Territory as (I would urge) an unincorporated, and probably unorganized, territory of the US. While I will be suitably circumspect in expressing an institutional view, if pressed I expect to express my personal enthusiasm for a course which will resolve the Trust Territory's status soon.

Ruth G. Van Cleve

cc: Robert Mangan
George Milner