



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF INTERIOR
 TRUST TERRITORY OF THE PACIFIC ISLANDS
 OFFICE OF THE HIGH COMMISSIONER
 SAIPAN, MARIANA ISLANDS

COMMERCIAL
 CABLE ADDRESS
 HICOTT SAIPAN

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April 19, 1966

Mrs. Ruth G. Van Cleve
 Director, Office of Territories
 Department of the Interior
 Washington, D. C. 20240

Dear Mrs. Van Cleve:

We refer to your letters of April 8, 1966, and April 12, 1966, both concerning the question of damage claims against the United States.

We appreciate very much your providing us with the substance of your statements to the Saipanese delegation, and we concur in the position as stated that substantially all the post-date-of-secure damage claims of the Micronesians have been settled. We know that some few do remain, but these consist mostly of claims for use of, or damage to lands used by the Military in the Kwajalein Atoll for a period of years after the War. We have long recognized that this class of claim still exists and have recently (in connection with the Kwajalein land settlement and Ebeye Housing Project) promised the Marshallese landowners that these claims will be administratively examined within the near future. You may recall that during the Kwajalein land negotiations we expressed our belief in a letter to your office that about \$100,000.00 should be reserved from the Land Fund for the purpose of paying these claims as our preliminary examination of them indicated that at least \$80,000.00 would be required. To our knowledge, there are no other such claims outstanding anywhere in the Trust Territory, with the possible exception of Yap. We do not believe such claims exist as to Yap, but we mention this possibility because to our knowledge there has not been a land title officer ever stationed in Yap, or any large-scale claims settlement program conducted, nor do our files indicate that this has been necessary.

As to claims arising in Saipan, we had understood, as did you, that the matter had been dealt with by the Navy by means of land exchanges. We also feel that the Government is correct in relying on the representations of the Navy that these claims have been settled, and we feel that it should not be too difficult to locate records supporting this position.

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We also are not persuaded that there are any substantial number of valid, unsettled post-date-of-secure damage claims at this time, and although it seems that a tremendous amount of duplicative work will be required, we feel that at least once more a genuine effort should be made to resolve this issue. We, therefore, concur in your conclusion that we ought to recommend to the Secretary that there be created a three-man fact-finding team to visit all pertinent districts of the Trust Territory and to report to the Secretary on the questions stated in your letter and within the limits stated therein.

We feel that the personnel of such a team should be the best and most experienced available, and we endorse Mr. Coote and Mr. Johnson as two of the members. We would also like to have Mr. Shoecraft serve on this team and believe that the matter is of such importance that we should make him available for this purpose. In this connection, however, we strongly suggest that the visit of the team and the commencement of its investigation of this matter be deferred until at least early August, as most of our staff, including Mr. Shoecraft, will be busy with the Congress of Micronesia during the month of July.

We have the two volumes of affidavits which were enclosed with your letter, but have not examined them as yet. We will do so as soon as possible and also attempt to locate any pertinent records which may be available here in Saipan. It also occurs to us that we have noted in classified correspondence that affidavits previously presented to the Navy may be among old Navy records in Washington.

In summary, we believe the general approach outlined by you seems to be quite sensible; the jurisdictional limits are wise; the personnel suggested are the best available, and we believe that the study should extend through the Trust Territory despite the danger of reopening matters which have been long settled.

Sincerely yours,



M. W. Goding
High Commissioner

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