



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

COMMERCIAL  
CABLE ADDRESS  
HICOTT SAIPAN

ADMINISTRATIVE CONFIDENTIAL

February 6, 1969

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

Dear Mrs. Van Cleve:

The purpose of this letter is to advise you of some serious problems, which have reached critical proportions, affecting our administrative relationship with the Peace Corps.

You may recall that George Milner accompanied me on my recent visit to Jack Vaughn. At this meeting we discussed the problems we are encountering as a result of increasing agitation by the political activists among the Peace Corps volunteers. The point I attempted to make in our discussion with Mr. Vaughn was that I felt it was the responsibility of the Peace Corps to lay down guidelines and rules of conduct which would keep the political activities of the volunteers within reasonable and constructive bounds.

I am sure that you are aware that from the outset of the Peace Corps program in Micronesia, the volunteers have taken the position that because this is a United States administered area they are not bound by the rules of conduct which the Peace Corps Handbook clearly prescribes for volunteers serving in foreign countries. They have shown little or no restraint in openly attacking governmental policies, the character and quality of the Administration, and reject the concept that they are here to provide needed skills and manpower to implement Trust Territory programs. In fairness, I must concede that there are many exceptions and many volunteers who perform ably and cooperatively. Their presence is welcome and valued, and some of them are beginning to express disenchantment with the voluble activists.

In connection with the increasing and publicly-known indications of the interest of the Department of Defense in Micronesia, some volunteers have openly attacked the United States defense policy in the Pacific area and have agitated against any further acquisition of land for establishment of military bases. I am sure that you can appreciate that all of this activity affects the atmosphere of the political future question, in which the Micronesians are becoming increasingly interested. A specific example of the disturbing and disruptive effect of the foregoing type of activity is illustrated in connection with the threatened movement of some residents of Ebeye back to the mid-corridor islands in defiance of Trust Territory Government and United States

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Army prohibitions against the occupancy of those islands. A Peace Corps attorney, Michael D. Rappaport, stationed in Majuro, is known to have advised Ataji Balos, a member of the COM from Ebeye, to proceed with the proposed move to the islands as a gesture of defiance. Mr. Rappaport was also a counsel to the Marshall Islands Nitijela and was instrumental in drafting the Nitijela resolution addressed to the United Nations attacking the United States Administration.

There is further evidence that Peace Corps volunteers have figured in the aggressive demands and threatened "sit-in" by the people of Ujelang. That the Peace Corps volunteers should become deeply and emotionally interested in the conditions of the people of Ujelang and Ebeye, as well as those of the residents of Kili, is understandable. But, I cannot accept or condone an extension of such interest that takes the form of plots and incitement to defiance of the Administration.

In addition to discussing the foregoing problems with Mr. Vaughn, I have also appealed to Roger Flather, Director, and Don Hartssock, Deputy Director, of Peace Corps/Micronesia. The difficulties they face in attempting to place restraints on freedom of dissent and on freedom of action are recognized. There has been some response and, at least in the Marshalls, the new District Director of the Peace Corps has succeeded in clamping down, to some extent, on the political activity of some of his volunteers. This is helpful.

From the outset of the Peace Corps presence in this area, I have been a staunch defender of the Peace Corps involvement here and have taken the position that, despite many administrative problems, volunteers have made a substantial contribution which has resulted in a significant net gain for our combined administrative effort. However, I am now of the opinion that, because of the disturbing and corrosive effect of the political activists, I can no longer take the position that the Peace Corps program is producing sufficient benefits to counterbalance the damaging effects produced between the Trust Territory Government and the people of Micronesia -- especially the COM.

When we appear before the Appropriations Committees of the Senate and the House next month, we are almost certainly going to be asked, as we were a year ago, how we are getting along with the Peace Corps. I shall feel obliged to summarize the current status of our relationship more or less as I have done in the foregoing. I thought that you and others in the Department of the Interior should be forewarned of this situation and be prepared to counsel further with me on this subject when I arrive in Washington next month. I believe

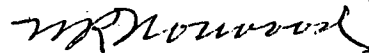
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that the situation should be called to the attention of our Committees in the Congress through appropriate channels so that interested members of the Committees will be acquainted with these events.

At a cabinet discussion on these problems yesterday, I found that all the members were in unanimous agreement that our relationship with the Peace Corps had reached such a state that a very careful and deliberate determination should be made as to how the Peace Corps presence in Micronesia could be terminated or phased out.

I shall be prepared to discuss this matter further with you and I welcome your comments by mail prior to my arrival in Washington next month, if you have some thoughts which you feel will be of help to me.

Sincerely yours,



William R. Norwood  
High Commissioner