

James M. Wilson - Arrival Statement - Koror

I have very great respect for the people here in Palau.
Here as representative of Ambassador Williams and USG.

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SPEECHES
6-12-72(10)

- FHW remembers last visit here in December with pleasure.
- Also remember with pleasure *the meeting with* meeting with chiefs in Saipan in May.
- Here in response to action taken by leaders in Palau, JCFS (headed ably by Sali) and COM on subject of public land.
- USG treating this very seriously and as matter of first importance.
- Specifically here to get all the facts on public land situation in response to request that public land be returned to traditional leaders in Palau "in trust" for the people before status negotiations go on.
- USG very sensitive to strong feeling of people of Micronesia regarding land and its importance.
- On so-called public land USG has always recognized that it belongs to Micronesians and does not claim it for itself.
- Instead has been holding it in trust for people.
- But also wishes to do what people want to do on the question of who should control it.
- Should recognize as well that USG has obligation under UN Trusteeship Agreement to see that all people in Micronesia are fairly treated.
- Had thought all the people would decide public land question in new constitution to take effect when trusteeship ended.
- Now it seems people of Palau and JCFS want this settled earlier.
- Here to see how this *might* can be done and how soon.
- USG has been studying question very hard over past few months.
- *(Much appreciate role played by Sali in urging early return to districts, and contributing to our education.)*
- Have talked to many experts in IT and in Washington.
- But need also to talk to people on ground who are most affected to make sure we understand as much as possible about the public land situation in each district *before making final decisions.* *Will be seeing traditional leaders, elected reps & others*
- Need to look at other districts *of the type* too to get the complete picture there if early return of public land to districts is what they want as well.
- So will be visiting Yap and Marian ~~Islands~~ after this, with another US group going to Marshalls, Penape and Truk to do the same thing there.
- Have asked JCFS to send with us anyone they wish

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- Look forward to talking to people here in Palau and learning from them.

- Delighted Sali and Pangelinan will be here at same time.

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