

THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

Old Executive Office Bldg
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Washington, D.C. 20506

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March 16, 1973

Dear Lazarus,

As you know I spent January and most of February traveling in Asia. Since my return I have been catching up on what has been going on while I was away. I have been particularly interested in hearing about your recently adjourned Congress. It sounds as if you had a very busy session.

Your letter of February 22 reached me only last week. I have studied it with considerable interest because of the new considerations it introduces with possible important implications for our future negotiations.

I am sorry to say that contrary to your assumption, your letter was the first word I have received from any responsible source since our visit to Koror last December on "the position taken by the Palau people" on the U.S. military land requirements agreed to in the partial draft Compact.

The suggestion set forth in your letter certainly deserves careful study and discussion both for its substance and for the underlying adjustments it may call for in the negotiating process we have been following.

The U.S., to repeat, has long recognized the significance and importance of land to the individual Micronesian and to the Districts concerned. The U.S. has also recognized the complexity of the problem given the past history of acquisition of public lands by the Spanish, the Germans and the Japanese and the disputes and competing claims to these lands in various parts of Micronesia.

The United States has made its position on land perfectly clear during the course of the negotiations. It intends to return to the Micronesian people title to all Micronesian lands now held under trust. The central questions are: to whom should the land be returned and when.

I understand that there is a diversion of opinion within the TTPI and within the COM on these questions. From your letter do I understand correctly that the JCFS now favors early action on the part of the TTPI administration transferring title to public trust lands in Palau to the traditional chiefs of that District for local decision as to the subsequent control and disposition of such land. Does the JCFS and the COM favor this same action for the other Districts as well and if so when?

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The issue is not a simple one. It cuts across a number of lines; The TTPI code; legislation establishing the District Land Commissions, the role of the Congress of Micronesia and the District Administrations and Legislatures, and current TTPI policies concerned with public land matters.

Since my trip to Palau I have been giving the public land question my attention in as much as I am basically in sympathy with the desire of those who seek an early resolution to this problem. At the same time you may recall that you have said, and we have said, that negotiations for U.S. land requirements as agreed in Annex B must be completed before the signing of a Compact.

This entire question is one that deserves the most careful consideration. Therefore, it is very important that I have the further thoughts of the JCFS on this subject and the ramifications of your suggestion for all of the Districts concerned. I would also be interested in the views of the JCFS on how it thinks the talks should proceed given the new position outlined in your letter that the political status negotiations should await the resolution of the disposition of the public trust lands before proceeding.

As to your second proposition I quite agree that in the future we should try to build on the work already accomplished. As you know the U.S. first sought to resolve two of the areas which the JCFS said were of greatest importance to the Micronesians: Control of laws (self-government) and control of land. These issues were resolved by preliminary understandings reached at Hana. Tentative agreements were subsequently reached in the areas of foreign affairs and defense and U.S. military land requirements.

We still have the areas mentioned in your letter to discuss. We have exchanged views on all three. Our draft of Title IV provides you with an insight on the U.S. position on finance, and the U.S. has stated its position on termination. With respect to transition the proceedings of the Koror, Washington and Barbers Point talks sets forth our clear views on this subject. For the past year the U.S. has been publicly and privately encouraging Micronesian initiatives leading to the adoption of your own form of self-government. In this regard I was again sorry to learn that the COM for internal reasons had decided against the early convening of a Constitutional Convention and other legislative measures concerned with the transition process.

As you know we were prepared to move further ahead last summer with the joint drafting effort, but the departure of some of your delegation and the early advent of your special session of your Congress brought our July talks to a close. At Barbers Point the U.S. sought clarification of your mandate, your authority and how you wished to proceed. Your request

led us to the tentative agreement that we would take up the remainder of the Compact in December. Regretfully, this round was postponed for practical reasons due to the election recount in the Marshalls and the defeat of two members of your delegation.

I regret that you now seem to feel that certain pre-conditions must be met regarding the agenda for the seventh round as well as a resolution of the land issue in Palau before your side would be prepared to resume the Negotiations. We had hoped to follow up on our tentative understanding that we resume our talks in May. Perhaps under the circumstances we should both give the matter further thought and consider the possibility of meeting sometime soon to exchange further views on how we might best proceed. I expect to be in Saipan later on this Spring. We might get together then or perhaps even sooner if it is possible for you to come to San Francisco or Washington. I would be happy to see you and also Ekpap if he could make the trip.

With all best wishes.



Franklin Hayden Williams
The President's Personal Representative
For Micronesian Status Negotiations

The Honorable Lazarus Salii
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