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Williams' Statement

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5/9/73

(WILLIAMS ISSUES STATEMENT)

MAJURO MAY 9 (MNS)---UNITED STATES AMBASSADOR FRANKLIN HAYDN WILLIAMS, PRESIDENT NIXON'S PERSONAL REPRESENTATIVE FOR MICRONESIAN STATUS NEGOTIATIONS, LEFT MAJURO WEDNESDAY (MAY 9) FOR TRUK FOLLOWING TWO DAYS OF MEETINGS WITH THE SIX DISTRICT ADMINISTRATORS OF THE TRUST TERRITORY DURING THEIR SEMI-ANNUAL DISTRICT CONFERENCE. BEFORE LEAVING THE MARSHALL ISLANDS, AMBASSADOR WILLIAMS ISSUED THE FOLLOWING STATEMENT TO THE PRESS:

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"I HAVE BEEN IN MAJURO THE PAST TWO DAYS AT THE INVITATION OF THE DISTRICT ADMINISTRATORS TO DISCUSS WITH THEM THE NEGOTIATIONS ON A FUTURE POLITICAL STATUS FOR MICRONESIA. WE DISCUSSED THE MEETINGS I HELD IN HONOLULU LAST FRIDAY AND SATURDAY WITH SENATOR LAZARUS SALIT AND CONGRESSMAN EKPAP SILK, RESPECTIVELY CHAIRMAN AND CO-CHAIRMAN OF THE CONGRESS OF MICRONESIA'S JOINT COMMITTEE ON FUTURE STATUS, TO REVIEW PROGRESS IN THE NEGOTIATIONS TO DATE AND TO PLAN FOR FURTHER MOVEMENT TOWARD A RESOLUTION OF THE STATUS QUESTION. THE HONOLULU TALKS WERE USEFUL AND PRODUCTIVE. WE AGREED ON SOME INTERMEDIATE STEPS WHICH MUST BE TAKEN BETWEEN NOW AND THE TIME--TENTATIVELY SET FOR LATE THIS SUMMER--WHEN OUR FULL DELEGATIONS WILL JOINTLY TURN TO THE TASK OF COMPLETING A DRAFT COMPACT OF FREE ASSOCIATION. IN THE MEANTIME THE CO-CHAIRMAN AND I WILL BE HOLDING A SERIES OF INFORMAL MEETINGS IN PREPARATION FOR THE RESUMPTION OF WORK ON THE COMPACT.

"THE U.S. HAD BEEN PREPARED TO RESUME FULL NEGOTIATIONS THIS MONTH, WHEN A NEW ELEMENT WHICH REQUIRES CAREFUL STUDY WAS INTRODUCED INTO THE NEGOTIATIONS BY THE JOINT COMMITTEE. I WAS INFORMED THAT IT HAD NOW BECOME THE POSITION OF THE JOINT

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COMMITTEE AND THE CONGRESS OF MICRONESIA THAT THE CURRENT POLITICAL STATUS NEGOTIATIONS CANNOT GO FORWARD UNLESS AND UNTIL ALL PUBLIC LAND IN PALAU IS RETURNED TO THE TRADITIONAL CHIEFS IN THE DISTRICT IN TRUST FOR THE PEOPLE.

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"THIS ISSUE IS NEW ONLY WITH RESPECT TO TIMING, NOT SUBSTANCE. THE U.S. GOVERNMENT'S POSITION ON PUBLIC LAND IS CLEAR. WE STATED AT HANA THAT ALL MICRONESIAN LAND BELONGS TO THE MICRONESIANS, THAT ITS CONTROL SHOULD REST IN THE HANDS OF MICRONESIANS, THAT IT IS OUR INTENTION THAT ALL PUBLIC LAND WILL BE RETURNED TO MICRONESIANS, AND THAT ULTIMATE RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE DISPOSITION OF PUBLIC LAND SHOULD REST WITH MICRONESIANS.

"WE HAD ASSUMED THAT THE WISHES OF THE PEOPLE OF MICRONESIA REGARDING CONTROL AND DISPOSITION OF LAND WOULD BE REFLECTED IN A MICRONESIA CONSTITUTED AND IN THE SUBSEQUENT DECISIONS TAKEN BY DULY CONSTITUTED AUTHORITIES AT THE CENTRAL AND DISTRICT LEVELS. NOW THE JOINT COMMITTEE AND THE CONGRESS OF MICRONESIA WANT THE U.S. TO UNDERTAKE THE TASK OF RETURNING PUBLIC LAND TO PALAU.

"THE U.S. INTENDS TO CONSIDER THIS SUGGESTION CAREFULLY. NATURALLY, WE MUST WEIGHT IT IN RELATIONSHIP TO ALL OF

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MICRONESIA'S DISTRICTS. THE REAL QUESTION IS TO WHOM OR WHAT ENTITY IN THE DISTRICTS THE LAND SHOULD BE RETURNED. BECAUSE OF THE MULTIPLICITY OF DIFFERENT LAND TRADITIONS AMONG THE VARIOUS DISTRICTS, THE RETURN OF THE PUBLIC LANDS IS A COMPLEX QUESTION REQUIRING EXTENSIVE CONSULTATION AND REFLECTION. WE ARE PROCEEDING TO EXAMINE IT AND WILL BE SOLICITING THE VIEWS OF ALL THOSE HAVING EXPERTISE IN THIS FIELD--THE TTPI ADMINISTRATION, THE CONGRESS OF MICRONESIA AND THE JOINT COMMITTEE, AND OFFICIALS AND PRIVATE CITIZEN LEADERS AT THE DISTRICT LEVEL. WHILE I DO NOT KNOW WHAT THE ULTIMATE DECISION WILL BE ON THE TIMING OF THE RETURN OF THE PUBLIC LANDS, I CAN ASSURE YOU THAT THE U.S. WILL WANT TO BE RESPONSIVE TO THE WISHES OF THE PEOPLE OF MICRONESIA AND THEIR LEADERS AT THE VARIOUS LEVELS OF GOVERNMENT.

"MANY MICRONESIANS CONSIDER THE QUESTION OF POLITICAL UNITY TO BE THE MOST IMPORTANT ISSUE FACED BY MICRONESIA TODAY. THE PROBLEM IS BASICALLY ONE WHICH THE MICRONESIANS MUST RESOLVE FOR THEMSELVES. HOWEVER, THE U.S. HAS PURSUED THE FUTURE STATUS NEGOTIATIONS WITH THE JOINT COMMITTEE ON FUTURE STATUS IN THE HOPE AND EXPECTATION THAT A COMMON STATUS WILL BE FORTHCOMING FOR THE MARSHALLS AND THE CAROLINES. THE U.S. WILL

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CONTINUE TO HOPE THAT OUT OF THOSE NEGOTIATIONS AND, MORE
IMPORTANTLY OUT OF THE DELIBERATIONS WITHIN MICRONESIA REGARDING
THE ATURE OF YOUR FUTURE GOVERNMENT--WILL COME A UNITED
MICRONESIA. WE CONTINUE TO BELIEVE THAT DESPITE CONSIDERABLE
CULTURAL DIVERSITY AND DIFFERING LOCAL PROBLEMS AND INTERESTS,
A UNIFIED MICRONESIA WOULD BEST MEET THE ECONOMIC, SOCIAL, AND
OTHER NEEDS OF THE PEOPLE CONCERNED. I WOULD LIKE TO RENEW
OUR FREQUENT EARLIER SUGGESTIONS THAT THE MICRONESIANS AND THEIR
LEADERS BEGIN SOON THE PROCESS OF FRAMING THEIR FUTURE
GOVERNMENT IN ORDER TO DEFINE, AMONG OTHER THINGS, THE DIVISION
OF AUTHORITY BETWEEN THE CENTRAL GOVERNMENT AND THE DISTRICTS,
LAWS ON MATTERS PERTAINING TO LAND, AND POLICIES WITH RESPECT
TO COLLECTION AND DISTRIBUTION OF REVENUES.

"THROUGHOUT THE NEGOTIATIONS ON MICRONESIA'S FUTURE STATUS
THERE HAS BEEN A CONSTANCY OF U.S. PURPOSE AND POLICY. THE
U.S. INTENDS TO LIVE UP TO ITS TREATY COMMITMENT. THE U.S. HAS
AN OBLIGATION TO THE PEOPLE OF THE TRUST TERRITORY TO GIVE THEM
AN OPPORTUNITY TO CHOOSE FREELY THEIR OWN FUTURE. THE U.S.
INTENDS TO FULFILL THAT OBLIGATION. WHILE WE HAVE SAID THAT
THE MICRONESIANS WILL HAVE THE FULL RIGHT OF SELF-DETERMINATION,

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