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DRAFT PRESS RELEASE

The United States Government today released a paper setting out its new policy regarding public land in Micronesia. The paper was prepared in response to a Micronesian request endorsed by the Joint Committee on Future Status. It emphasizes that public land has always been held in trust for the Micronesian people but concludes that if the people of the individual districts wish public land in those districts transferred to them now the United States is willing to do so.

This is concluded to be part of the continuing process of giving the people of Micronesia ever increasing responsibility for important aspects of their own government. Both the Congress of Micronesia and the District Legislatures are asked to play important roles in the matter.

Under this policy it should be possible to meet substantially a request from the Palau district that public land there be turned over to the traditional leaders chiefs to be held in trust for the people of Palau. Other districts can decide for themselves to whom public lands should be transferred and when.

The transfer is subject only to a few basic safeguards designed to protect individuals and permit the central government to operate freely until the end of the trusteeship. A large measure of flexibility is foreseen in the application of the new policy to individual districts in meeting the desires of the people.

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DMFT NEWS RELEASE

In making public today the details of the U.S. policy decision on returning public lands in Micronesia to district control, Ambassador Raymond Williams notes that this policy decision was taken in response to a request from the Congress of Micronesia's Joint Committee on Future Status that the U.S. undertake the return of public land to the district. The Ambassador has indicated that the text of the new U.S. policy was made available last week to Senator Lazarus Salii, Chairman of the Joint Committee, and said that he looks forward to discussing implementation of this policy with the full Joint Committee when the two delegations resume their talks in Washington next week.

The U.S. policy statement and an accompanying background paper designed to amplify the statement are attached.