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# Palau Is First To Ask For Public Lands

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News Saipan Bureau

SAIPAN — In the first formal response to the United States' month-old request, the Palau District Legislature has reaffirmed its desire to have the district's public lands returned to the people through the traditional chiefs by next May.

A unanimous resolution, adopted during a special session this week also stipulated that in the event the Congress of Micronesia fails to enact enabling legislation for the land transfer, this should be carried out through executive action of the TT High Commissioner.

According to Sen. Lazarus Salii of Palau, chairman of the congress' Joint Committee on Future Status, the legislature set next May as the deadline for arranging the transfer.

As a condition to returning public lands before the Micronesian trusteeship is terminated, the United States in November asked the six district legislatures to formally indicate the wishes of the people in each district with respect to the public

land located therein. This should include specifically whether the people of the district wish the Trust Administration to turn over public land in the district and if so to whom in that district and when," said the U.S. policy statement.

The U.S. requested that the Congress of Micronesia pass necessary enabling legislation and amend the TT Code as it relates to public land.

Palau's legislature also seconded a statement presented by a Palauan delegation at the Washington talks. This approved the U.S. proposal for the early return of public lands on four conditions: that the Palau legislature will accept the Congress of Micronesia's

legislature will represent title holders whose land is needed for U.S. defense purposes but that land return should not be conditioned on commitments to accommodate U.S. land requirements; that eminent domain procedures should be clarified; and that Palauan public lands should be returned through the traditional leaders.

Sixty-eight per cent of Palau's land area constitutes public lands acquired by U.S. and prior administrations and held by the U.S. "in trust for the people of Micronesia."