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TO: All Concerned
FROM: High Commissioner
SUBJECT: Policy Statement on Marianas Land

December 14, 1973

During the past few months there seems to have been some confusion concerning the Trust Territory's and Mariana Islands District's policy toward land leases, land transfers and homesteading -- particularly as it relates to the current negotiations between the United States and the Marianas Political Status Commission (MPSC).

To clarify the issues involved, I feel it necessary to make the following statements about land policies in the Mariana Islands District:

1. As long ago as December, 1972, the MPSC requested officially that Ambassador Williams should join with them in requesting the High Commissioner to consult with the MPSC on any and all leases of public lands in the Mariana Islands District before such leases were granted.

After several discussions involving Ambassador Williams, the Director of the Office of Territorial Affairs and the High Commissioner, Ambassador Williams assured the MPSC in April, 1973, that "...the High Commissioner would certainly give full weight to the counsel of the Marianas delegation in any particular transaction."

Subsequently, the Trust Territory administration, in compliance with a request from both the MPSC and the United States Government, adopted the following policy, which I wish to reaffirm, regarding public land in the Marianas:

During the active period of negotiations there will be no leases of public lands without consultation with the MPSC.

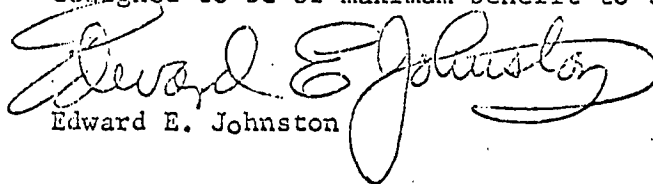
2. In view of the above expressed desires of the Marianas Political Status Commission and the plain logic of avoiding any speculative land transactions which might work against the best interests

of any future government of the Mariana Islands, several months ago I advised the District Administrator of the Marianas that no leases of public land to either citizens or non-citizens of the Marianas, should be granted without conferring with Senator Fangelinan as Chairman of the MPSC. To the best of my knowledge this policy has been followed and will continue to be followed.

3. With regard to the homesteading program on Tinian, the Trust Territory Government, with the full concurrence of Ambassador Williams, determined that it would not be in the best interests of the future of the Mariana Islands to grant any new homestead permits on the Island of Tinian after May 8, 1973, which was the date on which Ambassador Williams and his delegation revealed publicly the United States desires for land acquisition on Tinian.

Two points are of great importance in relation to this matter of Tinian homesteading: first, that transactions which were in process prior to the cutoff date of May 8, 1973, will continue to be processed, and second, that this is purely a temporary situation to remain in effect while negotiations are actively underway between the United States and the Marianas delegation to resolve the future of the Marianas. This temporary stand-down on the disposition of public land and issuance of permits for non-Micronesian business ventures does not mean that there is an economic moratorium on Tinian.

In summary, I emphasize once again that all the above policies in relation to the disposition of Mariana Islands public land are designed to be of maximum benefit to the future of the Marianas.


Edward E. Johnston