

EXECUTIVE OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT
BUREAU OF THE BUDGET
WASHINGTON 25, D. C.

April 2, 1948

MEMORANDUM FOR: Mr. David Stowe
The White House

Subject: Administration of Guam, Samoa, and Pacific Trust Islands

Recent handling of the matter of administration of Guam, Samoa, and the Pacific Trust Islands (Marshalls, Marianas, and Carolines) may be summarized as follows:

1) President's Committee. The President appointed, on October 20, 1945, a committee consisting of the Secretaries of State, War, Navy and Interior to make recommendations as to the Pacific Islands. This committee never met, but a subcommittee of representatives of the four departments recommended, Interior not concurring, that any decisions on the matter should await final disposition of the occupied Japanese islands.

2) SWNCC. Early in 1947, an ad hoc committee of the State-War-Navy Coordinating Committee (without Interior representation) considered the problem of the islands and recommended that organic acts for Guam and Samoa be submitted to Congress, providing for civil government, citizenship, bill of rights, etc. It suggested that a committee of representatives of State, War, Navy, Interior and Bureau of the Budget meet to recommend which agency should have responsibility for administration of Guam and Samoa. It also recommended that an Executive order terminate military (Navy) control of former Japanese mandated islands and install an interim Navy administration pending final decision.

3) Trust Islands. On April 2, 1947, the Security Council of the United Nations approved a trusteeship agreement for the former Japanese mandated islands (Marshalls, Marianas, and Carolines) with the U. S. as administering authority. Congress subsequently approved the agreement (P.L. 204, approved July 18, 1947). By Executive Order 9875 of July 18, 1947, the President vested Navy with interim administration over civil government of the Trust Islands.

4) Guam Petition. On May 1, 1947, the President received a petition from the Guam Congress for citizenship, organic act, bill of rights, etc. He immediately moved to re-activate his 1945 committee and asked it to report on administration of the Pacific Islands. By letter of June 18, 1947, the Secretary of State replied, presenting a course of action agreed to by him, and the Secretaries of Interior, Navy, and War. One item of agreement was stated: "The Navy Department should continue to have administrative responsibility for Guam and American Samoa on an interim basis pending the transfer to a civilian agency of the Government at the earliest practicable date, such date to be determined by the President." The President forwarded the Secretary's letter to Congress

with a message (see House Document No. 333).

5) Navy Commission. Meanwhile, the Navy had sent a commission of inquiry (three private citizens) to visit the Pacific Islands under Navy control. Upon receipt of the commission's report, the Secretary of the Navy announced (Press Release of May 11, 1947) that he concurred in the recommendations favoring organic acts and citizenship for Guam and Samoa and that other recommendations were under consideration (one other recommendation was for an independent agency to administer Pacific territories).

6) Legislation. Recent legislative history on the islands has been complicated by introduction of many bills, and would require a separate memorandum. In June 1947, however, the Navy and Interior Departments presented to the House Committee on Public Lands an agreed draft of an organic act for Guam. Those departments have recently completed drafting an organic act for Samoa, and the State Department will shortly submit to Congress a draft organic act for the Trust Islands.

7) President's letter of February 11, 1948. By letter of February 11, 1948 (drafted in the Bureau of the Budget), the President advised the Secretaries of State, Army, Navy, and Interior of his intention to designate Interior as the agency which would assume general supervision over civil government of the islands by transfer from Navy at the earliest practicable date after approval of the necessary organic acts.

Guam and Samoa Petitions

The following communications from Navy refer to petitions from Guam and Samoa relative to Navy administration:

1) Letter from Secretary to President, dated March 17, 1948, transmitting copies of resolutions of the Samoa General Assembly and the Fono (Advisory Council) of February 16-17, 1948, favoring continuation of Navy administration.

2) Memorandum from Assistant Chief of Naval Operations (Island Governments) to the President's Naval Aide, dated March 23, 1948, referring, among others, to the Samoan petition of February 17, 1948, and a Guam petition of September 6, 1947, again favoring continuation of Navy administration.

3) Letter from Secretary to President, dated March 24, 1948, referring to the several petitions noted above, and stating that although the Navy does not withdraw from its position favoring transfer of administration to a civilian agency as soon as practicable, an early transfer appears contrary to wishes of peoples concerned.

The following observations may be made on the Navy communications:

1) The petition of the Guam Congress dated September 6, 1947 (copy attached), is qualified in requesting continuation of Navy rule. "Resolved,...that the Navy Department continue to have the administrative responsibility of Guam, on an interim basis, pending the transfer to a civilian agency at the earliest possible date to be determined by the President of the United States, such date being, it is hoped, when the island has been completely rehabilitated and the economy of the island fully restored;..." It was always understood that the Navy ^{would} attempt to complete its rehabilitation of the island (largely quieting of land titles) before transferring supervision to a civilian agency.

2) What information do the Samoans have as a basis for asking in effect that Congress consider no bills relating to Samoa for ten years or more? Was the original Samoan petition drafted in English (as the present copy is)? Most Samoans do not read English. If the original resolution was in Samoan, copies should be made available. What picture do the Samoans have as to the alternatives to Navy administration? These and other questions raise doubts as to the significance of the petition.

3) Congressional approval of an organic act for Samoa at the present session is doubtful; and after passage of such act, some time will be required to transfer administration from the Navy. In other words, no immediate change in the handling of Samoa is contemplated. It is likely that a Congressional investigation of conditions in the islands and of opinions of the peoples involved will precede passage of organic acts. An impartial, on-the-spot investigation by the Executive may be in order. State and Interior personnel agree that the situation in Samoa is more complicated with less political advancement than in Guam.

4) It is noted that Navy has raised no strategic military objections to transfer to a civilian agency.

Recommendation

The recent communications from the Navy Department raise no difficulties as to the scheduled drafting, submission to Congress, and passage of organic legislation for Guam, Samoa, and the Trust Islands.

They do highlight, however, the difficulties to achieving agency agreement as to the "earliest practicable date" on which administration can be transferred to a civilian agency. In the absence of impartial evidence as to the wishes of native populations and as to dates on which it will be administratively feasible to transfer government to

a civilian agency, the question will be deadlocked between opinions of Navy, on the one hand, and Interior and State on the other.

Any meeting with the agencies concerned should have the following agenda:

1) Further details from Navy as to the drafting and the circumstances surrounding the Samoan petitions.

2) Agreement that in testifying on organic acts, agencies will favor provision for setting the effective date of organic acts at 90 days after passage, but will support provision allowing Executive determination of date of transfer of civil government to a civilian agency.

3) Initiation of discussions leading to agreement on machinery which could come into play after passage of organic acts and could determine date and arrangements for transfer from Navy. This machinery would need to be adapted in light of any Congressional investigation under S. Res. 196 (Cordon), dated February 5, 1948.

J. E. Fobes
J. E. Fobes

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Mr. Hopkins -

Returning the
attached for file.

(I believe Mr.
Stow requested it
from you some days
ago.)

H. Breitner

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