



THE WHITE HOUSE
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THE SECRETARY OF THE INTERIOR
WASHINGTON

MAR 10 1949

My dear Mr. President:

In your letter of February 11, 1948, you informed me of your intention, upon enactment of organic legislation for Guam, American Samoa, and the Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands, to designate the Department of the Interior as the agency responsible for supervising the administration of these islands, and you requested that planning to effect the transfer be expedited.

As a result of a recent field study made by a representative of this Department, I am convinced that no practical advantage is served by waiting for organic legislation to be passed before commencing the transfer. Authority to effect the transfer lies within your executive powers, and provision could be made, by legislation or otherwise, for necessary funds. The present uncertainty as to the timing of the transfer is an obstacle to realistic planning both in Washington and in the islands. Furthermore, if all action relating to actual transfer of jurisdiction is put off until enactment of organic legislation, this Department may be faced with the herculean task of initiating the transfer in more than one territory simultaneously and without benefit of the preliminary steps that can otherwise be taken.

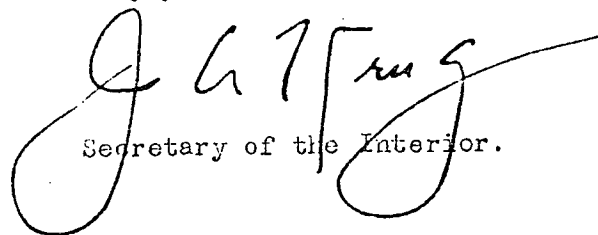
Planning for funds, personnel and programs would be greatly expedited and a more orderly execution of the transfer would be ensured if you were to fix, as soon as possible, a target date on which you intend to set the transfer in motion. I believe it is possible at the present time to fix such a date for the transfer of administrative jurisdiction for Guam. There are no problems involved in the transfer there which cannot be readily solved through interdepartmental cooperation. This also holds true for the Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands, but the transfer of responsibility there would be facilitated if it is initiated after the transfer in Guam is well advanced and after an approved plan for transportation has been developed. The only obstacle to an orderly transfer of jurisdiction for American Samoa is the misunderstanding, based partly on misinformation, which exists among some Samoan leaders and which has led them to fear the effects of the projected transfer.

For the above reasons, I strongly recommend that you fix January 1, 1950, as the date on which it is planned to set the transfer in motion on Guam, with the transfer to be completed not later than eighteen months from that date, and that you request all departments and agencies of the

Government to extend their full cooperation and assistance to this Department with a view to effecting an orderly transfer. The proposed target date is sufficiently in the future to permit a Congressional committee before that date to investigate and report on the financial, administrative, and legislative needs of the islands. I believe this to be desirable.

It is understood, of course, that your concurrence in this recommendation would, as you indicate in your letter of February 11, 1948, be "without prejudice to study and determination, based upon further study of long-range plans for administration of United States territories and possessions."

Sincerely yours,


Secretary of the Interior.

The President,

The White House.

