

IMMEDIATE RELEASE

MAY 18, 1949

The President on May 14, 1949, sent the following letter to the Secretary of the Interior:

"My dear Mr. Secretary:

I have today informed the Director of the Bureau of the Budget that the drafts of organic legislation for Guam and American Samoa, prepared by the Department of the Interior, have my approval. The Department of the Interior will have the responsibility of presenting the measures to the Congress. I have asked the Secretary of the Navy to assist you and I enclose a copy of my letter to him.

I indicated in my letter of February 11, 1948, to the Secretaries of State, Army, Navy and the Interior, that it was my intention, upon approval of organic acts for the Pacific Islands, to designate the Department of the Interior as the civilian agency with general supervision over civil administration of these islands. While I state again that such a designation would be without prejudice to future consideration based upon further study of long-range plans for administration of United States territories and possessions, it is my desire that realistic planning be undertaken immediately to effectuate orderly transfer of the aforementioned islands from naval to civilian administration. Accordingly, I request that you take the lead, in cooperation with the Secretary of the Navy, in developing a specific time schedule within which the desired transfers may be effected, regardless of the status of pending legislation. Preferably, under such a schedule, the Island of Guam should be transferred to civilian administration within the next year, and American Samoa and the Trust Territories within the next two to three years. Plans devised under these time arrangements can then be integrated with whatever legislative proposals are ultimately enacted.

I further request that you advise me by September 1, 1949, of the plans recommended under the aforementioned procedure.

It is the announced aim of this Government to accord civil government and a full measure of civil rights to the inhabitants of its Pacific territories. The accomplishment of this objective will be furthered by the transfer of these territories to civilian administration and the enactment of organic legislation at the earliest practicable date.

A copy of this letter is being sent to the Secretary of the Navy.

Sincerely yours,

(Sgd) HARRY S. TRUMAN

* * * * *