

THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

September 22, 1949

MEMORANDUM FOR MR. CLIFFORD:

Subject: Interior-Navy Agreements on transfer of administrative responsibility for American Samoa and Pacific Trust Territory from Navy to Interior.

As you requested, I have discussed these two agreements informally with Budget (Staats, Stauffacher, and Burton). I concur in their recommendation that the President approve them.

You may remember that the President on August 10, 1949, approved a similar agreement transferring administrative responsibility for Guam from Navy to Interior, effective July 1, 1950. Under this agreement a civilian Governor selected by Interior was to take over administration in Guam this month, but would be responsible to the Navy Department until next July 1, after which he would be responsible to Interior. The new Governor, Carlton Skinner (formerly Interior's Director of Information), has just left for Guam to take over.

It had originally been the President's plan to await the passage of organic legislation for Guam, American Samoa, and the Trust Territory, before transferring administration of these islands from Navy to Interior. However, because of the indefiniteness of this date and the consequent obstruction to orderly planning this plan was reconsidered, and on May 14, 1949, the President wrote the Secretaries of Interior and Navy that it was his desire to fix a definite time schedule for the transfer of the islands from naval to civilian administration, regardless of the status of the pending organic legislation. He instructed the Secretary of Interior to take the lead and, in cooperation with Navy, develop such a specific time schedule, reporting their recommendations on the matter to the President by September 1, 1949.

The Interior-Navy agreements on American Samoa and the Trust Territory now before the President complete fulfillment of the Presidential instructions. (The Trust Territory comprises the former Japanese mandated islands with respect to which the UN Security Council designated this country as the administering authority under a trusteeship agreement.)

The two new agreements are substantially identical with the Guam agreement except in two respects. The effective date of the transfer of responsibility from Navy to Interior is July 1, 1951, in each case, rather than July 1, 1950, as in the case of the Guam agreement. This later date is desirable in order to stagger the administrative load involved in the transfers. A civilian Governor in the case of Samoa and a High Commissioner in the case of the Trust Territory will be selected by Interior and designated by the President to assume office in each case on or about July 1, 1950. They will both be responsible to Navy until July 1, 1951, and thereafter to Interior. This will afford a smoother transition between naval and civilian control.

The other difference from the Guam agreement applies only in the case of the Trust Territory agreement. This specifies that the date for transfer from Navy to Interior control (July 1, 1951) has been selected on the assumption that regular air and sea transportation services, other than naval, will be available after the transfer date to meet essential requirements in the Trust Territory. Thus, if they are not available, it will be possible to postpone the transfer date. These transportation services are of prime importance in the Trust Territory, which consists of about 390 inhabited islands with a population of 51,000, these islands covering 3 million square miles of ocean, although their total land area is only 687 square miles. Transportation costs are, therefore, a major element in the administration of this Trust Territory. The same situation does not apply in the case of American Samoa, which is composed of 5 or 6 adjacent islands, with a population of 19,000 and a total area of 75 square miles.

Presidential Executive Orders will eventually be necessary to formalize these two transfers. Such an Executive Order was issued in the case of the Guam transfer on September 7, 1949. However, the Samoan and Trust Territory agreements become effective later than the Guam agreement, and it will not be necessary to issue Executive Orders on them until about July 1, 1950, or thereabouts.

The Guam transfer received a rebuff on the Hill last week when a Senate Appropriations Subcommittee refused to approve a supplemental appropriation of \$600,000 during fiscal 1950 for Interior to recruit and pay civilians to replace naval personnel now engaged in administering Guam and to pay their transportation costs. Interior is still hopeful that it may be possible to reverse this Subcommittee action in the full Committee. Even if this is not accomplished, however, it will not defeat the transfer.



The approval of the transfer agreements on Samoa and the Trust Territory would be in accord with the President's civil rights program. As he stated in his letter of May 14 to Interior and Navy, "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 approval of the present transfer agreements will further the accomplishment of this objective.

Attached are drafts of letters which I have had prepared for the President's signature advising the Secretaries of Interior and Navy of his approval of these two agreements. I also attach a proposed memorandum from you to the President recommending his approval.

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