

MAY 10, 1967

Office of the White House Press Secretary

THE WHITE HOUSE

STATEMENT BY THE PRESIDENT

I have today signed S. 303, amending the law authorizing funds for the government of the Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands.

Present law authorizes the appropriation of \$17,500,000 annually. S. 303 increases that authorization, for fiscal 1967, to \$25,000,000. For fiscal 1968 and 1969, it raises the figure to \$35,000,000 -- double today's amount.

The United States has an obligation, under the terms of our Trusteeship Agreement with the United Nations, to promote the educational, social, political, and economic development of the Trust Territory -- where 90,000 people inhabit 2,000 islands scattered over more than three million square miles of the Western Pacific.

We have made an appreciable start toward meeting that obligation -- though a great deal remains to be done to raise living standards in the islands.

From my visit to American Samoa in October of last year, and from conversations with leaders of the Trust Territory in Guam last March, I know of the urgency that attends this responsibility. I am happy to sign into law a measure that recognizes that urgency and allows us to respond to it meaningfully.

I have already asked that the Congress appropriate additional funds, both this year and next, so that among other projects we can build schools, hospitals, roads, airfields, and communication facilities, hire teachers and doctors and nurses, and provide for the economic development of the area. We are working to help the people of the islands become self reliant, and ultimately joined in a full relationship with other nations bordering the Pacific.

Another beneficial feature of the bill I am signing today is the recognition it gives to the presence of our Peace Corps volunteers in this area. They are serving at the request of the people of the Trust Territory in education, health, public works and community development work. They represent a vital expression of America's interest in the islands.

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