

# DEPARTMENT of the INTERIOR

news release

OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY

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SELF-GOVERNMENT GOAL FOR PACIFIC ISLANDS ANNOUNCED BY MORTON;  
FOREIGN INVESTMENT RESTRICTIONS TO BE LIFTED BY APRIL 1, 1974

SAIPAN, Mariana Islands -- Interior Secretary Rogers C. B. Morton, in a historic "Message to Micronesia," today announced support of the United States Government for a constitutional convention leading to self-government of the Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands. At the same time he announced the lifting of restrictions on foreign investment.

The message was recorded in Washington for broadcast in Micronesia.

Under a 1947 trusteeship agreement with the United Nations, the United States -- through the Department of the Interior -- administers the more than 2100 islands lying in a three-million square mile expanse of the Western Pacific Ocean. Fewer than 100 islands are inhabited by approximately 110,000 persons.

Administrative districts include the Marianas (except for Guam, a U.S. Territory), the Marshall Islands, Palau, Ponape, Truk and Yap.

In his message, Morton declared:

"The United States Government is giving whole-hearted support to the organization of a Constitutional Convention. I believe the development of this fundamental instrument is an essential part of efforts toward self-government.

"I am confident that the Congress of Micronesia will act rapidly to make the Constitutional Convention a reality. Your new constitution will be the blueprint for your future. It will be the cornerstone for important programs during the period of your transition from trusteeship to self-government. I have asked the High Commissioner, Edward E. Johnston, to make available any and all technical and staff support as requested by the Congress to assist in this historic step.

"With regard to the disposition of public lands, let me say that the U.S. policy represents a fulfillment of a promise made years ago by the United States to hold these lands in trust for the people. The decision to return control over public lands to those districts requesting it is full of meaning for the people of Micronesia. Acting through your elected and territorial government and traditional leadership you are now to assume responsibility for matters pertaining to land, culturally the most prized and socially and economically the most significant commodity in Micronesia. This constitutes an enormous step in transition toward self-government."

Of international importance, Secretary Morton announced:

"To promote further control by Micronesians over their own economic affairs, I have ordered the lifting of restrictions on foreign investment in the Trust Territory effective April 1, 1974. From that date, individual and commercial investors from any of the world's community of nations will be permitted to apply for business permits in Micronesia. More specifically, each District Economic Development Board will be able to consider business applications from any nation within the guidelines of your own Foreign Investors Business Permit Act. Under the terms of that Act, the High Commissioner will have final authority to review each recommendation of the District Economic Development Boards.

"I have instructed the High Commissioner to base his review on the security of the area and the general welfare and development of the Micronesian people."

In further support of the self-government goal, Secretary Morton said he is instructing U.S. representatives to work closely with the Micronesians to implement a comprehensive program of education for self-government, "so that it will reach all areas and all levels of society."

He added:

"We will continue the policy of elevating qualified Micronesians into more responsible positions in the Administration. I have asked the High Commissioner to submit to me his best forecast of manpower needs over the next three years so that we might determine how more Micronesians may be placed in key positions."

Already, Morton said, Micronesians hold the directorships in Health Services, Education, and Public Affairs. He pointed out that at the beginning of the Nixon Administration in 1969, no Micronesians served in the High Commissioner's cabinet, and only one Micronesian was a District Administrator. Today eight of these top level positions are held by Micronesians.

Citing advances in road construction, hospital and school expansion, and modern sewage disposal facilities, Morton pointed out that local revenues have jumped from \$850,000 to \$4.5 million in the last five years.

Tourism has become big business in Micronesia with the building of airports and hotels. In 1973 some 48,000 visitors added over \$3.5 million to the local economy.

He announced that Stanley S. Carpenter, Director of Territorial Affairs, will work with High Commissioner Johnston, the Congress of Micronesia and district leaders to prepare a revised five-year plan aimed at providing more power, water, classroom space, roads, sewage systems and airports.

Already established are the Micronesian Occupational Center and the Micronesian Community College.

"We have a new hospital in Truk, and planning is completed for another in Ponape," Morton said. "The long-sought Renrak Bridge connecting Babelthaup with Koror has been funded and will soon be a reality."

Morton gave emphasis to this statement:

"As we approach the end of the Trusteeship we believe even greater responsibility for Micronesia must be assumed by the people of Micronesia. There will remain many areas that will be shared with you. But for the larger part, the future of Micronesia is a Micronesian matter. The responsibility for determining your future government is yours. The obligation to promote social, economic and political welfare of Micronesians is yours. The right to self-determination is yours."

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