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# United States Department of the Interior

OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY  
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20240

SEP 12 1980

## Memorandum

To: Ambassador Peter R. Rosenblatt, President's Personal Representative for Micronesian Status Negotiations

From: Assistant Secretary Designate  
Territorial and International Affairs

Subject: Consultation with Micronesian Entities

This is to respond to your memorandum of August 15, 1980, in which you raise concerns regarding certain Interior actions related to our responsibilities toward the Trust Territory. I regret having to take the time to respond to it, but I wish to see that the record is accurate and complete.

You state that "until recently the inhabitants of the Trust Territory have had little say in the formulation of Washington and Saipan decisions affecting them," that your office and mine "have found themselves in the peculiar position of dealing with the same Micronesian leadership in sharply contrasting ways," and that Interior has regarded Micronesian leaders "as lying outside of the chain of command through which the most important decisions affecting the TTPI were made." the record is clear. Interior has steadfastly encouraged Micronesian self-government -- in the establishment of the Congress of Micronesia in 1965, and its predecessor and successor legislative bodies; in the educational programs which have produced a wide base of educated native political leadership in each Micronesian entity; in the placement of Micronesians in positions of Executive authority; and in consistent effort to assist the negotiations as a natural process by which the Micronesians will develop a status satisfying to them as well as to the Federal Government.

This Department, having always sought the development of self-government among the Micronesians, fully supports a negotiated political relationship that will permit the achievement of Micronesian political desires. The Department of the Interior has implemented United States policy in the Trust Territory for thirty years, and no one who observes the level of competence, responsibility, and strength in Micronesia's political life today could justly deny that the United States has achieved a great deal in its relatively short tenure as trustee.

You also imply in your memorandum, that we ignore Micronesian leaders. In the interests of good government and responsible public

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administration, we generally consult with the leaders of Micronesia through the High Commissioner. His job, difficult at best, would be made impossible if we were to engage in end runs. The High Commissioner is in constant consultation with Micronesian leadership on Micronesian soil. So far as we know here, Micronesian leaders have not charged that we fail to consult with them.

As administrators of the Federal relationship with Micronesia, Interior in Washington must rely on direct consultations between Micronesian leaders and the High Commissioner. We know of no occasion when the High Commissioner has failed adequately to consult with them. It would be improper for us to rely on Washington law firms for the conduct of everyday administration in the Trust Territory, because it is the leaders of Micronesia and the High Commissioner who share the Executive authority in Micronesia today. Of course, when Micronesians come to Washington, we deal with them directly, and when we do so, we inform the High Commissioner of what has transpired. If there is a difference in the way our office and yours approaches Micronesian leaders, it is because of the difference between administrative authority and the negotiating process and not in a difference in motivation.

As to this Department's participation in promoting U.S. alternatives to a Japanese communications system in Micronesia, you are aware that the Japanese had made only one preliminary mission to discuss communications with the Micronesians, when the House of Representatives passed a bill that, if enacted, would require the Secretary of the Interior to install American-made communications systems in Micronesia. You have also been fully informed of the strength of conviction of certain Congressmen on this topic. Officials of the Department of the Interior did all that could be done, in the time that was available, to avoid a situation in which the Japanese would have offered concrete communications proposals to Micronesian governments only to learn that there would be obstacles to their implementation causing a great deal of embarrassment for Japanese and Micronesian leaders. Deputy Assistant Secretary Gordon Law acted swiftly and carefully to consult with State Department officials, Micronesian leaders, and finally, Japanese officials, to reconcile a developing confrontation and to avoid a situation that would have presented difficulty in the future for the United States, for Micronesian leaders, for the Japanese and for you as chief negotiator. Indeed, it was my consultation with you during Gordon's stay in Japan which helped greatly in smoothing out a very difficult situation. While some minor strain may exist between the United States Government and the Government of Japan as a result of the communications issues, I suggest that our efforts are to be applauded rather than condemned.

On the matter of the Northern Marshalls health plan, the Department of the Interior has moved quickly, and we think, effectively thus far and we cannot accept the charge of insufficient deference to the Government of the Marshalls. The Government of the Marshall Islands was invited to our August 4 consultation in June. At the Marshalls request, we agreed to meet separately with them in July, to suit their convenience; they

chose to arrive late for the July session and to characterize that meeting as not useful. We distributed our discussion paper (which indicated the scope of work) for the August 4 meeting by hand to Mr. Dominick of the Marshalls and to attorneys for the Marshalls on August 1. That paper announced the August 18 deadline for comments. Although interested people from the Marshall Islands Government were in Washington on August 4, they chose to absent themselves from the meeting that day. At considerable inconvenience to several dozen Federal representatives, among others, we scheduled another meeting at the Marshall Government's request for August 6. They had all of the pertinent documents in advance, and representatives of the Marshalls were afforded the same 2 1/2 week period for comment that all other representatives had. It is perhaps worth noting that no representatives, not even those from the Marshalls, have complained to us of an insufficient time for comment. Everyone involved must recognize that without such early deadlines, we cannot hope to meet the January 1, 1981, deadline that Congress has imposed. In sum, we have been more than willing to consult with the Marshall Islands Government, and we have gone to extreme lengths to accommodate their scheduling requests, as well as their genuine concerns for the program.

You attached an additional note to your memorandum of August 15, concerning a trip to Micronesia of the Region Nine Public Health Service team of the Department of Health and Human Services. Our office was informed of that trip, which is performed by Region Nine approximately twice every year, on June 24. Miss Johnson of my staff wrote a memorandum of her telephone conversation with Ms. Doris Lauber of the Region Nine office and gave a copy of it to Jim Berg of your staff.

We here are very much aware that our actions may at times have some impact on the substance as well as the psychological environment of the political status negotiations. You will always be made aware by us of such actions, as we wish to be supportive of your efforts in response to the President's objectives for Micronesia.

  
Wallace O. Green

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