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UNITED STATES
DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY
Washington 25, D. C.
DOI Waiver Letter In ERU File

September 10, 1952

My dear Mr. Murphy:

I have reviewed the draft of an executive order which would transfer administrative jurisdiction over Saipan and Tinian from the Department of the Interior to the Department of the Navy. The Department is opposed to the approval of this draft order. Although the precise reasons which prompted the drafting of this order have not been identified, I presume they relate to national defense. If so, I am confident that far more sensible means can be worked out to satisfy essential defense requirements.

The Department opposes the draft order for the following reasons:

1. It would create two governments in the Trust Territory, each with its own laws, policies, and programs. The resulting confusion to the islanders, the Congress, and the United Nations Trusteeship Council would be serious and would subject the Administration to severe criticism.

2. It would cause Saipan and Tinian to be separated governmentally from Rota, Anatahan, Agrigan and other islands in the Northern Marianas. Plans for creating a District Advisory Council for all the Northern Marianas, which the United Nations Trusteeship Council has urged, would be nullified.

3. Economic development of the Trust Territory would be thwarted. Saipan and Tinian are the future breadbaskets of Micronesia. They have the richest farming lands in the Trust Territory and grazing capacity for over 10,000 head of cattle. They are already producing large quantities of vegetables for export to Guam, and cattle are being purchased to stock the range. These islands can contribute greatly to the economy of the Trust Territory and should provide resettlement sites for inhabitants of overpopulated islands.

4. The proposal would substantially increase the overall cost to the Federal Government of administering the Trust Territory. Saipan is the governmental center for the Northern Marianas District of the Trust Territory. Governmental facilities there would be lost to the present territorial government,

necessitating the establishment of other facilities for administration of the other islands in the Northern Marianas. The Navy Department would in turn have to create a basic organization for education, agriculture, laws, etc., which would, even if staffed by naval personnel, still represent added costs to the Federal Government.

5. This Department and the High Commissioner, after thorough study, are convinced that the headquarters of the Trust Territory should be established as soon as possible within the geographical confines of the Trust Territory, preferably at Saipan or Tinian. The proposed order would force the Trust Territory Government to establish its headquarters elsewhere at enormously greater cost for both construction and maintenance.

6. The order would be interpreted as a reversal of that portion of the President's Civil Rights program, now successfully concluded, relating to the establishment of civilian in place of naval government in the Pacific Islands. It is noteworthy that the Trusteeship Council has commended the United States for its action in transferring the islands to civilian administration.

7. The order would of itself add in no way to security controls or defense use of these islands. By agreement between the Interior and Navy Departments, no person, ship, or plane can enter the Trust Territory during the current national emergency without approval of the Secretary of the Navy. The United States is authorized to establish bases and otherwise to utilize the area for defense purposes. The Government is also authorized under Article 13 of the Trusteeship Agreement with the United Nations to close any areas for security reasons, and to determine the extent of United Nations supervision to be exercised in such areas. Both the maintenance of military bases, as at Kwajalein, and the conduct of classified operations in an area closed for security reasons, as at Eniwetok, can be accomplished without fragmentation of civil authority in the Trust Territory. This Department has agreed that there should be made available to the Navy Department lands in the Trust Territory which the Navy has designated as being required for military use, and discussions are under way as to the terms under which private and territorial lands are to be made available for such use. To my knowledge, there has been no dissatisfaction by the military agencies, the Atomic Energy Commission, or any other agency with the security arrangements

in the Trust Territory or with the cooperation which they are receiving from the Trust Territory Government or this Department in matters related to national defense. It should be emphasized that simply placing the administration of these islands under Navy Department jurisdiction adds nothing to the security of the area, detracts in no way from the United Nations supervision over these islands, and would result only in confusion, waste, and inefficiency in the administration of the Trust Territory and severe criticism in the United Nations as well as throughout the country.

For these reasons, we urge that the draft order not be approved and that the agencies concerned be requested to seek a solution to the problems which gave rise to the order within the framework of a unified civilian government of the Trust Territory.

Sincerely yours,

/s/ VERNON D. NORTHROP

Under Secretary

Mr. Charles S. Murphy
Special Counsel to the President
The White House