



Trusteeship Council

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COMMUNICATION FROM SENATOR JOSHUA KOSHIBA, SENATE, FIRST OLBIIL
ERA KELULAU (CONGRESS), PALAU, CONCERNING THE TRUST TERRITORY
OF THE PACIFIC ISLANDS

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The Senate
FIRST OLBIIL ERA KELULAU
REPUBLIC OF PALAU
KOROR, PALAU
96940

12 January 1982

The Honorable John Sieberling
Chairman, Subcommittee on Public Lands
and National Parks
House of Representatives
United States Congress
Washington, D.C.

Dear Mr. Chairman:

As Chairman of the Senate Committee on Foreign Affairs of the Palau National Congress, and in connexion with your brief visit to the Republic of Palau, I submit for your perusal this statement outlining the problems facing the Republic today. As you will be in our Republic for only a few hours, I feel it necessary to detail in writing basic fundamental problems which threaten our future livelihood and which may not be readily apparent to you. Virtually all of these problems relate to the creation and maintenance of a basic economic infrastructure capable of supporting meaningful growth in our economy.

Power. The electric power situation in the Republic is bleak. Power outages are common and result in spoiled foods for our populace and decreased productivity in the public and private sectors of our economy. During your stay in Palau, you

will likely not be inconvenienced by power outages as you will stay in a hotel fortunate enough to be able to afford its own power generating facility. The vast majority of the people and businesses in the Republic are not so fortunate.

Water. The water situation in Palau is poor. Water hours are in effect year round, with most people receiving water only two or three hours per day. Even when the water is running, it is not drinkable. Several people have become seriously ill from drinking our tap water. Drinking water must be collected in steel drums from improvised rain water catchment systems. The most severe effect of our water problems can be seen at our hospital where the water runs only for a few hours each day. Patients cannot bathe, equipment cannot be sterilized, surgery must be postponed, and toilets are not functional. I sincerely hope that you do not become ill during your stay in Palau!

Communications. Communications both within Palau and between Palau and the outside world are sadly outdated. Low-frequency radios are notoriously inefficient and subject to interference. It is virtually impossible for us to make long distance calls. This severely impairs our access to news, our neighbours, and the United States Government.

Transportation. Today, Palau is served by only one airline - Continental Air Micronesia. Under Continental Airlines' routes, Palau is a transportation cul-de-sac. No other airline is allowed to service Palau on a regular basis. The United States controls our airspace through the Civil Aeronautics Board and the Federal Aviation Agency and seems extremely unsympathetic to our plight. To promote tourism we need increased air services and competition to lower fares.

Additionally, our runway is extremely short. Several hoteliers have expressed interest in building large hotels in Palau but are prevented from doing so because of the length of our runway, a mere 7,000 feet. Large hotels need large airplanes. Unless our runway is lengthened to accommodate the large airplanes prevalent today, tourism will never get off the ground in Palau.

The combined effect of the deficiencies outlined above is not only an inconvenience for our people. The above-stated problems create the worst possible climate for encouraging the investment of foreign capital in Palau. Who would invest in an area without reliable and safe water, power, communication and transportation? Who will risk starting a business in a nation from which he cannot contact his partners outside that nation, or be assured of speedy replacement of damaged parts or supplies?

While you are in Palau, things will probably appear clean and neat. Roads will be graded and smooth; the water will likely run all day; and electrical outages may be designed so as not to affect you to the greatest extent possible. Those things were done for visiting dignitaries under the old government system, and continue today through force of habit. After the next rainstorm, the roads will become impassable. After a week of dry weather, the water will decline in quantity and quality.

Our people would like to know, Mr. Chairman, when the situation will change. After 40 years of creating a massive governmental bureaucracy and dependency of our people on financial assistance from the United States, our budget is cut and we can no longer afford to pay salaries and buy fuel for our power plant, let alone other expenses such as books for our libraries and spare parts for broken equipment. Most tragic of all is that we have no private sector to fall back on because of the lack of a basic economic infrastructure. Funds for our capital improvement projects have been cut off, thereby reducing the chance that such an infrastructure will ever exist.

I hope the tone of this letter is not too caustic. All I hope to accomplish is to advise you of our problems and our dilemma, and request some indication of what we can expect. We must plan for our future, and without sufficient information as to where we can turn to for assistance, we will be unable to do so. Please enjoy your stay in Palau but while you do so, please keep my comments in mind.

Sincerely yours,

(Signed) Senator Joshua KOSHIBA
Chairman
Senate Committee on Foreign Affairs

cc: High Commissioner McCoy
President, United Nations Trusteeship Council
Secretary of the Interior James Watt
President, Republic of Palau
