

## **LYNDON BAINES JOHNSON LIBRARY**

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### **Biography**

Lyndon Baines Johnson assumed the responsibilities of the presidency on November 22, 1963, after the assassination of President John F. Kennedy. He was elected president by an overwhelming majority in 1964 and served until January 20, 1969. He was elected to the U.S. House of Representatives from Texas in 1936 as a New Deal Democrat; was elected to the U.S. Senate in 1948; and became majority leader of the Senate in 1954. After being sworn into office in November 1963, President Johnson embarked upon an ambitious legislative program that came to be known as the Great Society. It included a medical program for the elderly (Medicare); several civil rights acts; antipoverty and urban renewal projects; and federal aid to education, science, medicine, and the arts. His foreign affairs experience did not match his successful domestic record. He expanded the Vietnam War, which became very costly both in manpower and money, and generated increasing opposition that resulted in a major antiwar faction within the Democratic Party. This opposition to the Vietnam War, coupled with the devastating riots in several American cities, led to President Johnson's announcement in March 1968 that he would not run for reelection.

### **Nature of Document Search**

We visited the Johnson Library on December 16-17, 2004. The Library archivists assisted in locating relevant documents in the Library's principal collections: the White House Central Files (WHCF), the WHCF Confidential File, the National Security File, the Office Files of the White House Aides, the Enrolled Legislation reports, the Personal Papers of Anthony M. Solomon, Oral Histories, and Agency Records (in particular the Department of the Interior). The WHCF contained several folders referring to the economic development and political status of the Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands. The National Security File also contained several folders relating to the Trust Territory. Unclassified documents from these folders were selected for copying and inclusion in this collection. Where documents were unavailable because they had not been processed or declassified, we requested a mandatory review of such documents under the applicable rules of the National Archives and Records Administration to determine whether they

could be made available to us. Since our visit we have received a few of these documents; action is still pending as to most of them.

### **Highlights of Johnson Library Documents**

The interagency efforts to address the future of the Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands under the leadership of President Kennedy lost any sense of urgency or priority after his assassination. His directive to implement the recommendations of the Solomon Mission report (National Security Action Memorandum No. 268 dated October 25, 1963) produced responsive reports from State and Defense in late 1963, but no such report was ever submitted to the White House by Interior. Solomon was appointed to a position at the State Department and in April 1964 sent a copy of his group's report to Walter Jenkins, an assistant to President Johnson, and commented that "implementation is going more slowly than the timetable of our political objectives permits." But the White House staff was not prepared to recommend any intervention by the president. The interagency task force created by President Kennedy's directive in April 1962 to improve conditions in the Trust Territory and prepare for a plebiscite by 1968 was abolished by President Johnson on Interior's recommendation without any consultation with State.<sup>1</sup>

**Letter, April 6, 1964, Solomon to Jenkins**  
**Memorandum, February 25, 1965, from President Johnson to Director, Bureau of the Budget**  
**Memorandum, January 24, 1966, Sisco to Solomon**

As anticipated by State Department officials, United Nations criticism of American administration of the Trust Territory gained momentum in the early years of the Johnson Administration. Although complimentary of the improvements that had taken place since 1961, the report of the UN Visiting Mission in 1964 commented that the high standards of social development being applied by the United States made "self-sufficiency a distant goal" and that the spending was "putting the Trust Territory even further out of touch with its economic base." The World Health Organization filed a blistering report with the United Nations detailing the widespread deficiencies in the health care provided for Trust Territory residents. The WHO's harshest criticism related to the conditions of the territory's hospitals, dispensaries, and laboratory facilities; it described much of the equipment in the hospitals as "ancient or decrepit" and accused the United States of misrepresenting these conditions in its earlier submissions to the Trusteeship Council. The basic conclusions of the WHO report were supported by Eugenie M. Anderson, the U.S. representative to the Trusteeship Council who conducted her own inquiries in the Trust Territory in late 1965. She prepared a report of the situation, including the steps necessary to provide for self-determination on an expedited basis, and was anxious to submit her recommendations directly to President Johnson. Although Secretary of State Rusk recommended that the president meet with Ambassador Anderson for this purpose, President Johnson by his handwritten comments on a staff

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<sup>1</sup> Willens & Siemer, *National Security and Self-Determination: United States Policy in Micronesia (1961-1972)* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 2000) [hereafter *National Security*], 57-59.

memorandum turned down her request and indicated that the matter should be handled by other administration officials.<sup>2</sup>

**Memorandum, January 19, 1966, Johnson to Bundy**  
**Memorandum, January 22, 1966, White to President**

Notwithstanding the absence of active White House support, Defense and State officials labored to produce a program that would implement those political and economic objectives in the Trust Territory established by President Kennedy. According to a State memorandum, Interior resisted efforts by Defense and State to move toward a plebiscite in the territory no later than 1968 for a variety of reasons: “uncertainty about the Solomon recommendations; hostile Congressional climate; need to await the outcome of one survey or another; and differences within Interior as to what should be done.” Looking for a way of dealing with these interagency differences, State and Defense proposed that a special assistant to President Johnson be designated to coordinate the agencies and produce a policy regarding the Trust Territory that would have presidential support. In order to implement this approach State drafted in late 1965 a proposed national security action memorandum that would result in the appointment of such a special assistant by the president. At a meeting in early 1966 among the various agencies to review their different approaches to the Trust Territory, State officials encountered “strong opposition” from Interior to the idea of a special White House assistant.

**Memorandum, July 13, 1964, Gordon to Bundy**  
**Draft National Security Action Memorandum, September 7, 1965, prepared**  
**By McHenry**  
**Memorandum, January 24, 1966, Sisco to Solomon**

The disagreement among the agencies during the Johnson Administration regarding the future political status of the Trust Territory did not preclude some significant improvements in the funding and management of the territory during this period. The annual funding for the territory increased from \$15 million for fiscal year 1963 to \$17.5 million for each of the next three fiscal years, followed by increases to \$25 million for fiscal year 1967 and to \$35 million for 1968 and 1969. Under considerable pressure to create a territory-wide legislative body, Interior in late 1964 by secretarial order created the bicameral Congress of Micronesia and the first elections to select its members were held in January 1965. A Washington consulting firm, Robert R. Nathan Associates, was hired to do a comprehensive analysis of the economic and other factors relevant to preparing an economic development plan for the Trust Territory. Its extensive report in late 1966 concluded that the Trust Territory administration had failed to develop any long-term plan for the economic development of Micronesia. The report expressed the view that “progress toward economic viability in Micronesia is a realistic and obtainable objective.” It outlined a five-year plan for economic development stressing the need for outside investment and labor and suggested that the Northern Marianas was one

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<sup>2</sup> Report of the United Nations Visiting Mission to the Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands, 1964, U.N. Trusteeship Council, 31<sup>st</sup> Sess., Supp. No. 2, U.N. Doc. T/1628 (1964), 54, 56-57; *National Security*, 63-69.

of the most attractive locations for tourism in the Trust Territory. However, the Nathan report concluded that the present uncertainties regarding political development deterred economic development and that political uncertainty “makes it impossible to assure economic certainties.”<sup>3</sup>

**Memorandum, September 18, 1964, Read to Bundy**  
**Department of the Interior Press Release, October 2, 1964**  
**Department of the Interior Press Release, February 27, 1965**  
**TTPI Press Release, June 4, 1965, Statement of High Commissioner before U.N. Trusteeship Council**  
**Memorandum, March 18, 1966, Johnson to McPherson**  
**Memorandum, March 21, 1966, McPherson to Watson (approved by President)**  
**Memorandum, March 24, 1966, Udall to President**  
**Interior Department Press Release, May 21, 1966**  
**TTPI Press Release, February 13, 1967, Transmittal of Nathan Report**  
**Letter, May 3, 1967, Anderson to Schultze**

Although an earlier effort to extend the Peace Corps to the Trust Territory had failed, the proposal was renewed in early 1966 and resulted a few months later in an announcement of a large-scale program that ultimately placed nine hundred volunteers in Micronesia. Strong support for the Peace Corps at State, and a change in Peace Corps leadership, contributed to this change in policy, as well as the cumulative weight of criticism of Trust Territory programs reflected in the UN Visiting Missions of 1961 and 1964, the World Health Organization report in 1965, and Ambassador Anderson’s report in early 1966. Interior did not support such a sizeable Peace Corps presence in the Trust Territory, not surprisingly in light of the fact that the initial proposal by the Peace Corps to Interior began with the proposition that over the past five years “the deficiencies and shortcomings of US administration in the Pacific Trust Territory have been clearly expressed.” Although his national security adviser recommended his personal involvement, President Johnson turned down the invitation to announce the new Peace Corps initiative in the Trust Territory, concluding that Interior and the Peace Corps could “handle the Trust Territory.”

**Memorandum, March 29, 1966, Pritchard to Carver and Van Cleve**  
**Memorandum, April 27, 1966, Johnson to Rostow**  
**Memorandum, May 2, 1966, Sisco to Johnson**  
**Memorandum, May 3, 1966, Johnson to Rostow**  
**TTPI Press Release, May 10, 1966**

During the last two years of the Johnson Administration the debate over the future political status of the Trust Territory reflected a new sense of urgency fostered in part by the recently elected Congress of Micronesia. In August 1966 this group petitioned President Johnson to establish a commission to consult the Micronesian people regarding their future political status and to report no later than the end of 1968. Interior’s reaction

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<sup>3</sup> *National Security*, 61-62, 95-98, 104-07.

to the proposal was that a presidential commission would be useless unless members of the U.S. Congress were included on the commission. For several months State, Defense, and Interior officials attempted to develop a commission proposal that could be presented to the U.S. Congress with some chance of approval. As a result of these extended agency negotiations, President Johnson did not acknowledge, much less act upon, the petition from the Congress of Micronesia for more than a year. Following the president's trip to Guam in the summer of 1967, his national security adviser, Walt W. Rostow, recommended that he approve the recommendation of the Secretary of the Interior to use "a Presidential commission with Congressional participation as the means for improving the chances of Congressional cooperation in solving the problem of the Trust Territory." He reminded the president of the year-old petition of the Congress of Micronesia and the "great interest in the Trust Territory in determining the future constitutional and political status of the Territory. He emphasized "the strong proprietary attitude of the Congressional committees involved, particularly the House Committee on Interior and Insular Affairs" regarding this issue, but advised the president that "Secretary Udall has already made informal soundings with the key Congressional figures and has encountered a favorable reaction to the recommended approach." President Johnson approved this recommendation and the proposed legislation creating such a commission was submitted to the U.S. Congress on August 21, 1967.

**White House Press Release, March 21, 1967**

**TTPI Press Release, March 21, 1967**

**Letter, March 22, 1967, Norwood to Udall**

**Memorandum, July 25, 1967, CIA staff to Helms**

**Memorandum, July 26, 1967, Helms to Rostow**

**Memorandum, August 2, 1967, Udall to President**

**Memorandum, August 3, 1967, Rostow to President**

**Memorandum, August 8, 1967, Rostow to President**

**Memorandum, August 10, 1967, Udall to President**

**Letter, August 21, 1967, President Johnson to Speaker of the House**

**Letter, August 21, 1967, President Johnson to President of the Senate**

The Congress of Micronesia was not prepared to defer its consideration of the territory's future political status pending the outcome of these interagency discussions in Washington and legislative deliberations regarding the Johnson Administration's commission proposal. In the absence of any response to its 1966 petition, the Congress of Micronesia in August 1967 created its own Future Political Status Commission with one member from each of the six districts within the Trust Territory. This commission issued an interim report in July 1968, summarizing its fact finding efforts, its preliminary assessment of future status alternatives, and the need for more political education before Trust Territory residents could make an informed and realistic decision regarding their future status. It concluded "that the people of Micronesia still lack understanding of the present institutions of government, the political context under which the present government is cast, and the suitability of the present institutions of government in relation to their needs." The interim report was well received by federal officials, in large measure because the commission had decided not to make any substantive recommendations

regarding future status alternatives until it completed an additional year of investigation and deliberation.<sup>4</sup>

**Letter, June 3, 1968, Rostow to Enke**

As the Micronesian commission continued its work through the remaining months of the Johnson Administration, the federal government essentially had no viable policy for dealing with the Trust Territory's future status. The House Interior Committee had rejected the administration's proposal for a status commission, even one with Congressional participation. The administration had no fall back position. Some thought was given to creating a status commission by presidential directive, but both State and Interior advised the White House staff in October 1968 that the U.S. Congress would respond adversely to any such move by the administration.<sup>5</sup>

**Memorandum, October 18, 1968, Sanders to Califano, with handwritten notes dated November 25, 1968**

The failure of the Johnson Administration to deal effectively with the Trust Territory left a challenging legacy for the next administration. After Typhoon Jean struck Saipan catastrophically in April 1968, destroying or severely damaging 90 percent of its housing, Saipan's leaders criticized the indifference of Trust Territory administrators. They sent a delegation to Japan to seek financial aid from business leaders and government officials there to help repair the damage to the Northern Mariana Islands. Antonio B. Won Pat, Guam's representative to Washington at the time, wrote President Johnson about the embarrassment to the United States that resulted from the incident and his concern about the "growing feeling on the part of the people of the Trust Territory that they have been somewhat neglected with respect to their economic, social and political development." A different form of criticism came from the Joint Chiefs of Staff, who were not content to let the question of the Trust Territory's future status languish until the next administration without registering their strong views. They advised the Secretary of Defense that the Trust Territory continued to have the same strategic importance that it had in earlier years, identifying the specific security concerns arising from the Vietnam War and the need to redeploy American forces after these hostilities ended, as well as the continued need to deny the Trust Territory to possible enemies. The assessment of the Joint Chiefs of Staff regarding the performance of the Johnson Administration in dealing with the Trust Territory was a glum reminder; they noted "with concern that we do not appear to be any nearer to the achievement of the U.S. goal of moving the TTPI into a permanent relationship within the political framework of the United States than we were when the policy was announced by NSAM 145 in April 1962."

**Letter, May 20, 1968, Won Pat to President**

**Memorandum, June 4, 1968, Anderson to McPherson**

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<sup>4</sup> *National Security*, 122-24.

<sup>5</sup> *National Security*, 118-22.

