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MEETING WITH UJELANG LEADERS CONCERNING THE RETURN OF THE PEOPLE OF ENIWETOK

The meeting was held from approximately 2:15 p.m. to 3:45 p.m. on August 22, 1972 in the Trust Territory Headquarters' Conference Room. Those present were: Stanley S. Carpenter, Deputy Assistant Secretary for Territorial Affairs, Department of the Interior; Peter T. Coleman, Deputy High Commissioner; Oscar de Brum, District Administrator, Marshall Islands; Ataji Balos, Representative, Congress of Micronesia, Marshall Islands District; T. R. Mitchell, Executive Director, Micronesian Legal Services Corp.; Gideon Smith, Magistrate, Ujelang Council, Johannes Peter, Iroj, Ujelang; Lorenji Jitiam, Iroj, Ujelang; John Abraham, Councilman, Ujelang; Russell W. Walker, District Attorney, Marshall Islands; Hamlet J. Barry, III, Attorney, Micronesian Legal Services Corp.; Lorenzo L.G. Cabrera, Program Administrator, Micronesian Legal Services Corp.; Billy Sawej, Counselor, Micronesian Legal Services Corp., Majuro; Edward C. King, Deputy Director, Micronesian Legal Services Corp.; Maynard Neas, Headquarters Lands and Surveys Division; and Clarence E. Takeuchi, Assistant Special Consultant. Mr. Sawej served as interpreter for the Marshallese group.

CARPENTER: Its a real pleasure to be able to meet with the leaders from Ujelang. I did not receive the August (?), 1972 letter from Micronesian Legal Services Corp. before leaving Washington, D.C. There should be no discussion of the legality of the situation at this time. This letter of August 22, 1972 presents a series of pre-emptory demands and the language used in the letter is offensive.

MITCHELL: I wish to elaborate on the letter. While we appreciate the difficulties of the problem, after 26 years there ought to be answers forthcoming soon. The people should be returned to Eniwetok as soon as possible. We have learned that plans are being made about Eniwetok without involving the people. For instance, we found out that Dr. Helfrich is planning a summer institute at the Eniwetok Marine Biological Laboratory for 1973. The High Commissioner also made a statement at Ponape about a meeting to be held on September 7 in Washington, D.C. that concerns Eniwetok. September 7 is very near. Something very concrete and definite is necessary; also something soon on compensation for prior damage to the atoll.

BARRY: Rehabilitation is the main concern of the people. They want to return as soon as possible to Japtan Island. In the near future. A temporary site can be set up. Ten or twelve people from Ujelang can go to rehab Japtan. Col. Circeo said such a program would not interfere with PACE.

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- CARPENTER: The Interior Department and Trust Territory Government are very sympathetic about the problem. I find this letter somewhat offensive. A different type of language is desirable. The September 7 meeting is simply to discuss administrative arrangements before we start thinking of specific plans. There will be other such meetings but when we get down to specific planning, the local Eniwetok leaders will be directly involved. Once preliminary arrangements are made, focus of attention will then be out in the Trust Territory.
- BARRY: No offense was intended by the letter. The remarks are made strongly, but no offense is intended. We have made no decision whether to release the letter to the press.
- CARPENTER: There's a need to approach the problem with a minimum amount of emotion. It would be best not to try the case, if there is one, in the press.
- KING: The substance or form (of the letter)?
- CARPENTER: Both.
- MITCHELL: In our view these people have the supreme right to determine when they are to return. Do you believe they are here to beg and plead with you for what's rightfully theirs?
- CARPENTER: We are not going to get far with that kind of language. I would think we're dealing as equals. Lets proceed with some of the points made in the letter.
- BARRY: The people would like to get back to Japtan now and to proceed with the coconut planting as soon as possible.
- COLEMAN: It is important to recognize that we are all here to help the Marshallese. No one has the exclusive jurisdiction or right on this. The administration will do its part. How should we proceed; question by question or take them all at once?
- MITCHELL: Point by point.
- CARPENTER: We need to study the matter carefully here and in Washington, D.C. I'll be glad to give my personal views here. These will be tentative and subject to review.

- CARPENTER: Question. 1. The request must be carefully considered from every angle; for example the subsistence for the people. Everyone is considering the earliest possible return of the people.
- COLEMAN: It is not necessary to go into details while Mr. Carpenter is here. We need to study the realities of the resettlement. The Department of Defense has control (of Eniwetok) until December 31, 1973. How many will be involved? Perhaps we can handle 10 or 12. Is it the desire for all to move? If we have a mass of people, there will be need for schools, medical facilities, etc. We will also need a time schedule.
- If the DOD approves 10 to 12 people now, we can plan accordingly. Can Japtan support the people? What about Ujelang?
- MITCHELL: My understanding of what Mr. Coleman and Mr. Carpenter have said is that the people could return to Japtan as soon as practicable?
- COLEMAN: Yes, as soon as practicable. No one here wants the people to remain away from Eniwetok any longer than necessary.
- MITCHELL: What do you mean by practical? As soon as practicable might be next week, or next month.
- COLEMAN: This must be discussed with DOD. We need to know, for instance, how many?
- MITCHELL: Ideally all.
- CARPENTER: It might be possible by December, 1973 but we need to have answers to all the points put forth by Mr. Coleman.
- MITCHELL: When will we know? Can we establish exactly where we go on Japtan?
- COLEMAN: This must be thoroughly discussed with DOD.
- BARRY: I agree. Col. Circeo said that the return of the people would not interfere with the PACE program.
- CARPENTER: I agree with "as soon as practicable" but there are other agencies involved and they must be consulted. These requests cannot be decided here today.

- MITCHELL: I still feel we're in the dark, and we're not further along than when we started. Could a definite date be set when an answer could be given concerning the return of these people? Will the DOD discuss this at the September 7 meeting?
- CARPENTER: Not here. There are many people involved in this question. The September 7 meeting is not that kind of meeting. It is to discuss preliminary administrative arrangements among the various agencies.
- MITCHELL: The leaders have been there. The people want to go back as soon as possible. They see it as practicable.
- CARPENTER: We are sympathetic to their desire but I can't say more right now.
- MITCHELL: Do you know who in DOD we might contact ourselves to see about a return of the people.
- CARPENTER: There is no one individual in DOD. They are many who are involved.
- MITCHELL: Would you know what groups in DOD?
- CARPENTER: I don't know at this time.
- MITCHELL: If we sit down within 30 days with Mr. Coleman, would this give you enough time in Washington to complete details?
- CARPENTER: You cannot put a claim on me or Mr. Coleman. We need to know what the people want in more detail. There is no time limit.
- MITCHELL: In preparation for this meeting, we discussed this at great lengths. We are talking about 86 families.
- BARRY: We are willing to utilize surplus material found on Japtan and Parry Island. Temporary housing is okay.
- COLEMAN: Let us decide when to meet and then discuss the details such as Health Services, Public Works, Community Development, and our timetable. Let us meet tomorrow while the people are here. We can discuss problems about support and then advise Mr. Carpenter.

- BARRY: Good. Glad to meet tomorrow and go into details.
- COLEMAN: Let us meet tomorrow at 2:00 p.m. in this room.
- CARPENTER: I'd like to be sure the Ujelang leaders understand that the Department of the Interior and Trust Territory are not opposed to early return. We wish the people to return as soon as possible with adequate facilities and other support.
- As to point #2 Eniwetokese will definitely be included in the planning for rehab of the atoll. With regard to #3 I can't speak for DOD. This must be decided in Washington.
- MITCHELL: Who will be at the September 7 meeting from DOD?
- CARPENTER: I don't know.
- MITCHELL: Could you ask regarding #3 at the September 7 meeting?
- CARPENTER: I will ask them to express their views. In relation to #4, I believe that it is presently planned to leave buildings and materials on Eniwetok for the people. Regarding #5 this is a good point but there is no timetable on it. A specific timetable will be impractical at this time.
- COLEMAN: There is an agreement in principle on the procedure to follow. There will be a memorandum of understanding.
- MITCHELL: There is a need for a general statement of understanding. Can we put together a draft statement and forward it to Washington?
- CARPENTER: That will be very helpful. We want to have things go as smooth as possible. Regarding points 6 and 7, I should make it clear that I am only a representative of the Department of the Interior. So I cannot act as requested in the first part of point 6. I support the letter of July 10, 1972 mentioned in point 6. The environmental draft was reviewed in Interior by many people who contributed to the final draft. Interior wants to make sure PACE didn't start before it met all of our considerations. We are still waiting for a revised Air Force statement. If it doesn't meet Department of the Interior's concern, we need to discuss further.

- MITCHELL: What is the Department of the Interior's position if the Air Force statement is not satisfactory.
- CARPENTER: Interior would continue to impose objection to the PACE project. We need more information about point #8. The work can more properly be done in the Trust Territory by Mr. Coleman and his people.
- COLEMAN: We need more specific information; which islands were destroyed? Who are the particular owners?
- MITCHELL: We need to give emphasis to #8. Who can we talk to? Maybe we will have to go to Federal Court in Washington, including involvement of the President of the United States. Who do we contact? The Solicitor of the United States? We want to start moving.
- CARPENTER: The first step is to compile your claim after discussions within the Trust Territory. Again, no one person in Washington has jurisdiction over these matters. For example, the Congress of the U.S. is involved in order to appropriate funds. The procedure begins here in the Trust Territory. I endorse and fully agree with #9. I will do all within my power. There is a need to again emphasize the need for goodwill among all concerned. I can guarantee the goodwill of the Department of the Interior and I am certain Mr. Coleman can for the Trust Territory.
- MITCHELL: Regarding the press, the High Commissioner made an announcement without consulting anyone from Eniwetok. We cannot say we are not going to respond to the press about this meeting.
- CARPENTER: It is how you respond. It depends upon the nature of your response. I want to make it clear that I cannot speak for other departments of the government. Don't report I have said more than I actually did.
- I want to reassure the Ujelang leaders that we want to see them return to Eniwetok as quickly as possible with proper consideration for their welfare. I hope that this meeting was helpful to them.
- MITCHELL: I have nothing further. We have no personal animosity towards the TT government and I appreciate your presence here today. We are determined to accomplish our mission and we look forward to establishing better understanding.

**CARPENTER:** I appreciate that. This meeting was not planned for this trip but it is a pleasure for me to meet with all the Ujelang leaders.

**SMITH:** (Marshallese Magistrate of Ujelang) In behalf of Iroijs Johannes and Lorenji, I thank you for your concern. We understand our return to Eniwetok cannot be decided right now but we hope you will try to carry on so that we can return to Eniwetok as soon as possible.

Essentially correct:

  
Peter T. Coleman