Republic of the Marshall Islands
OFFICE OF THE PUBLIC DEFENDER
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OFFICE MEMORANDUM

To : **HON. WISELY ZACKRAS**
MINISTER OF JUSTICE

From : CHIEF PUBLIC DEFENDER

Re : OFFICE REPORT 2025

Ilo kautiej Hon. Minister,

We wish to take this opportunity to thank you Hon. Minister for allowing the Public Defender Office ("PD Office") to report on our office achievements and proposals for this year 2025, please.

1. STAFF

Madam, the current staff members are as named below and years of service to the Republic:

Chief PD	-	**Russell Kun, Esq.** (Over 19 years)
Asst. PDs	-	**Karotu Tiba, Esq.** (Over 15 years)
	-	**Mr. Benjamin Sadrugu, Esq.** (Over 10 months)
	-	*Vacancy for another PD Staff Attorney (RMI Citizen only)*
Chief TA	-	**Neti Nathan** (Over 23 years)
Admin. Executive	-	**Rufina Langrine** (Over 21 years)
Legal Secretary	-	**Marley Jorok** (Over 4 years)

1(a) Staff Travels

Hon. Minister, the PD Office travels to Court sessions on Ebeye Island, Kwajalein Atoll, or other Outer Atolls, are always at the call of the District and High Court's calendar for hearings and trials.

2. CASELOAD ACHIEVEMENTS

Hon. Minister, the PD Office is a Public Law Office and defends both, criminal and civil cases day-in and day-out before the Courts, and the workload of cases in the PD Office before the Supreme Court (if any), High Court, TRC and District Court are divided and handled by the Chief PD, PD **Tiba** and PD **Sadrugu**, and District Court cases only are assigned to TA **Nathan**.

Since the placement of **Mr. Sadrugu** (RMI Citizen) as an Asst. PD around January 22, 2024, the workload of cases in the PD Office has become manageable.

However, the PD Office has left aside funding and Vacancy for another PD Staff Attorney (RMI Citizen only).

And there is a never ending influx of defending new cases especially all Criminal cases, on all fronts of Civil actions and Civil matters that lead to Land disputes, and not forgetting Misdemeanor criminal cases and those traffic violations - we take them all on!

2(a) Criminal Matters - High Court

As the Hon. Minister is already aware that the PD office is bound by the Public Defenders Act, criminal cases, pursuant to Section-303(1) of the PD Act, are a priority and the bulk of defense actions before the Courts in the RMI are taken up by our office.

2(b) Civil Actions - High Court

Hon. Minister, most of these civil actions, as provided by Section-303(2) of the PD Act, are Debt Collections from Banks, Companies or Individuals, then there are Divorce and Child Support claims and Domestic Violence complaints, and most of all, Land Title disputes.

And the Hon. Minister is aware that, appearing and representing parties in these land and customary title disputes are always complex as they involve the unique traditional practices and custom of the Marshall Islands, and so they are very time consuming.

Then there are those land claims that involve substantial monetary benefits derived from the real property become more complex and some these cases have been brought back from the dead by the new generation and descendent of the parties who brought the before the Courts many years back -- it never ends.

The Chief PD is handling most of these land matters before the Traditional Rights Court ("TRC"), and there are a number of *new* actions that have been filed before the High Court and quickly making their way to be heard before the TRC, as the High Court would find that certain land and customary issues that need to be addressed and determined by the TRC.

2(c) Misdemeanor Cases - District Court

Hon. Minister, although not as complex as the cases before the High Court, these misdemeanor cases take a very heavy toll and load on our office, especially on TA **Nathan** as the only Trial Assistant in the office - and they never stop bringing in those citation tickets!

But not anymore, as the new PD **Sadrugu**, is assisting and taking in the workload in most of these Misdemeanors.

Unfortunately, Hon. Minister, the PD Office is bound under the Confidentiality Rules for Lawyer/ Client, and are not at liberty to openly discuss our cases with anyone, unless the Client allows the Lawyer to disseminate such information, please.

3. PRIORITY THAT THE PD OFFICE IS FOCUSING ON FOR 2025

As explained above, the Hon. Minister is aware that the PD Office is a Public Law Office that operates on Personnel with **6** Staff members, currently comprised of **3** Attorneys with **1** Trial Assistant and **1** Vacant Attorney Post, with **1** Administrative Executive and **1** Legal Secretary.

And at this juncture Hon. Minister, the only proposed change in the PD Office that we have been focusing on from past years to date, is as follows:

1. To open a PD Office on **Ebeye Island**, Kwajalein Atoll.
2. One PD Attorney - (commencing at **$35,000** per annum) for RMI Citizen only.
3. Office Equipment/ Computer for new office.
4. Housing Rental per year.
5. Differential Expenses per year; and
6. Professional (Admission & Attorney Fees) Services.

With respect Hon. Minister, we hereby submit the PD Office Report for 2025, please.

Please accept our greatest Kamolol Tata,

Russell Kun, Esq.

Chief Public Defender

Dated: Friday, January 10, 2025.

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