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THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

January 23, 1979

MEMORANDUM TO THE PRESIDENT

FROM: BOB LIPSHUTZ

*BJL*

RE: Guyana

Regarding the efforts to recover expenditures by the federal government in connection with this matter, I am attaching an article from The New York Times of Tuesday, January 23.

Attachment

## J.S. Sues Temple for Costs of Returning the Dead

By ANTHONY MARRO  
Special to The New York Times

WASHINGTON, Jan. 22 — The Justice Department filed a civil suit in Federal District Court in San Francisco today, seeking to recover more than \$4.2 million from the People's Temple of California to pay the cost of bringing the bodies of more than 900 members to this country after their mass deaths at the Jonestown commune in Guyana last November.

A spokesman for the department, John Russell, said that the assets of the church were believed to be "much more" than the \$4.2 million figure. He said the Justice Department had already taken steps to freeze some of the assets, particularly

large bank deposits in Panama and elsewhere.

In the suit filed today, the Justice Department charged that the church had failed to protect the more than 900 people in its commune from wrongful death or injury and that this had led to an emergency situation that required intervention by the Government.

### U.S. Government Expenses

The court papers assert the Government had incurred expenses of \$4,298,000 to date, mostly in connection with the efforts by military personnel to identify the bodies and remove them to this country for burial. The United States Government became involved in the matter after the

suicides and slayings of Nov. 18 of the followers of the Rev. Jim Jones, the founder of the People's Temple.

The deaths of cult members took place shortly after the killing of Rep. Leo Ryan, Democrat of California, who had visited the commune to check allegations that some persons were being held there against their will.

According to the Government's suit, the church members who died in Jonestown Nov. 18 had either expressed or implied contracts with the church that it would provide them with the necessities

of life, including proper burial. However, the suit charged, the church failed to tend to the needs of its members and did not

provide those who died with burial, or "protect the dead from indignities." Because of this, the suit charged, it was necessary for the United States Government to intervene, particularly after the Government of Guyana refused to permit the church members to be buried in that country.

The suit is aimed at the People's Temple of the Disciples of Christ, which is a California corporation, and three "alter ego" organizations based abroad: These are the People's Temple of the Disciples of Christ in Guyana, and the People's Temple Christian Church Company Ltd., both Guyana corporations, and the Association Religiosa Pro San Pedro, S.A., a Panamanian corporation.

The precise value of the church's various assets is not known, but earlier this month the Justice Department was re-

ported to have identified some \$10 million in various Panamanian banks, in addition to real estate and other assets in San Francisco, Switzerland, Venezuela and Guyana.

### Church Spokesman Protests

SAN FRANCISCO, Jan. 22 — Pat Richartz, administrative assistant to Charles R. Garry, a lawyer for the People's Temple, said, "I think it's outrageous for the Government to charge that amount of money. I think the living need to be taken care of as well as the burial of the dead before the Government gets any more money. The survivors need psychiatric care and jobs." Mr. Garry was not available.

Most of the survivors of People's Temple who still live here have drifted apart.

They vacated their headquarters building, an old synagogue, on Jan. 1, and Mr. Garry has petitioned the California Superior Court here to dissolve the corporation. The assets would be used to pay debts and then be divided among survivors, according to the petition.