

# U.S. Cedes Swan Island to Honduras

San Pedro Sula, Honduras

Robert H. Finch, on a special Latin American mission for President Nixon, signed away the Swan Islands to Honduras yesterday in what he called "a demonstration of the strong ties of friendship and good will which unite us."

"By our actions here we are emphasizing our determination and our firm commitment to cooperate fully in endeavors of mutual benefit to our peoples," Finch told

President Ramon Ernesto Cruz during a brief, rainy ceremony at this city's airport.

Finch and his party were in Honduras only two hours before flying on to Mexico City.

The tiny Swan islands, 97 miles off the coast of Honduras, had been under U.S. sovereignty since 1863 despite Honduras' repeated claim that they belong to Honduras.

The three square miles of sand and coral have little monetary value. A weather

station, a navigation station and a communication station are all they contain.

Columbus discovered the islands on his fourth trip to the new world in 1502. During Spanish colonial times the islands were under Honduras' jurisdiction.

In 1956 the U.S. Congress passed the Guano Act, which permitted Americans to lay claim to any uninhabited islands if they established companies to export guano to be used as fertilizer. An American, George V. White, claimed the islands in 1857.

In 1908 the United Fruit Company established a radio station on the islands.

*Associated Press*