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DEPARTMENT OF STATE A/CDC/MR

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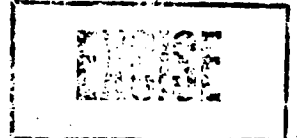
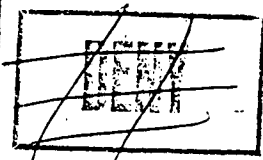
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DRAFT DISCUSSION PAPER B5



the Pacific Islands

Problem

We have, on the one hand, a treaty commitment under our trusteeship agreement with the UN Security Council to promote self-government or independence for the people of the Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands (TTPI). We have, on the other hand, a determination by the JCS that they consider it essential for strategic reasons that the TTPI continue to be associated with the United States. Our problem therefore is to find a way to permit the people of the Territory to exercise their right of self-determination in circumstances which will ensure their continued association with us and effectively remove the area from further international supervision.

Failure to move with reasonable speed in resolving this problem could jeopardize a generally favorable political climate in the TTPI and could create serious problems for us in the UN. Although local interest in self-government remains tame by usual standards, there has recently been a distinct growth of local interest in the TTPI's

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political future. We must in any case anticipate keen international scrutiny of the U.S. administration by the UN Trusteeship Council which has a visiting mission inspecting the Territory at the present time.

Our political position is complicated by the poor job we have done in administering the Territory in past years and by the extent to which this performance has been publicized. Despite recognition throughout the Government that the resources being devoted to the development of the Territory are insufficient, proposals for increased appropriation were not acted upon by the last Congress; they will be resubmitted this year. The only real step forward has been the introduction of some Peace Corps volunteers on whom we are relying for increased assistance in elementary education, public health and community development.

Proposed Solution

Apart from continued efforts to invigorate our administration of the Trust Territory, the solution we propose for the Territory's political future is a plebiscite in which the people would be able to choose from among several different options, followed by action in the UN to demonstrate that the inhabitants of the

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Territory had exercised their right of self-determination. The plebiscite should offer independence, continuation of the trusteeship status, or free association with the United States. Although the plebiscite could conceivably offer some form of integration with the U.S., we doubt that the U.S. Congress would approve or that the Micronesian people themselves would, for example, choose to become part of Hawaii. Nor could such a realignment be accomplished without serious strains in the area.

Feasibility

We believe these options would all be compatible with our international obligations so long as we consulted the UN adequately in advance of a plebiscite and permitted sufficient UN supervision of the plebiscite itself.

Moreover, in such circumstances we believe the UN would agree that we had adequately met our obligations.

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We are quite certain that the people of the Trust Territory desire some form of association with the United States. Our definite preference would be that they choose free association with provision for self-governing status following a set period during which

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the Trusteeship status would remain in effect. We believe we could obtain this result if we were to move fast enough and to spell out the terms adequately, but arrangements which would involve a substantial delay in the actual achievement of self-government would significantly reduce the formula's appeal in both the UN as well as the TTPI. Similarly, failure to spell out the political and economic advantages of free association would probably lead the people of the TTPI to choose the status quo, a result which would in large part defeat our purpose.

Difficulties with Interior

Although Interior, which has primary responsibility for administration of TTPI, has begun to develop some sense of urgency, it has not yet come to grips with the basic issue of the Territory's future, both from a reluctance to take an initiative in a matter of strong Congressional interest and from a concern that any program for the Trust Territory must conform to the policies we have followed over the years in dealing with exclusively American territories--i.e. that we must not provide the TTPI with a status better than that now enjoyed by our three non-self-governing territories of Guam, Samoa and the Virgin Islands.

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We appreciate the Congressional problem but are convinced that an Executive initiative is not only proper but essential, and while we recognize the difficulties of leapfrogging the TTPI to self-government over the other American territories, we do not consider them insuperable obstacles. Defense tends to share our view in the belief that the most important objectives are to ensure the TTPI's permanent association with us and provide the necessary degree of political autonomy which would remove the Territory decisively from UN supervision. Whatever the specific arrangements, we think it essential that we achieve solid agreement within the Executive Branch as to precisely what we want and then undertake a major "education campaign" with the Congress to obtain advance approval from key Congressional figures before moving on with a plebiscite in the TTPI.

Interior Proposal

Interior has now proposed legislation which would have the U.S. Congress establish a status commission in response to a resolution of August 3, 1966 of the Congress of Micronesia petitioning the President "to establish a commission to consult the people of Micronesia

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to ascertain their wishes and views and to study and critically assess the political alternatives open to Micronesia." The commission as designed by Interior would include six members from the U.S. Congress, six from the Congress of Micronesia, three from the Executive Branch and two public members selected by the President with the chairman elected by the members. The purpose would be to determine and publicize the various political alternatives for Micronesia and to make recommendations to the President, U.S. Congress, and Congress of Micronesia by mid-1968.

Our Proposal Alternatives

We do not favor Interior's proposal because it would come close to dumping a problem in which the Executive Branch has a vital interest into the hands of a body whose recommendations we could not adequately influence. Not only is the timetable envisaged by Interior too drawn out, but we would have no assurance that the commission would recommend arrangements permitting continued TTPI association with the U.S. without further UN surveillance. For example, given the attitude of Interior itself and the Interior committees of

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Congress, the commission might very well recommend some status similar to that of Guam. This would not do for the TTPI where we are obliged by precedent to offer a plebiscite and obliged by treaty to include the options of independence or self-government.

Since Interior is open to suggestions, we would recommend the following alternative to their commission proposal. ~~We propose that State, Interior, Defense and the White House agree on the following program and~~

~~following sequence of action:~~ [a) Executive Branch agreement on the desirability of an early plebiscite ~~offering the people of the TTPI; continuation of their trusteeship status, independence, or self-government within five~~

years; b) Determination of the ^{options to be offered in the plebiscite, with the} political and economic ^{option in association with the U.S.} prerequisites of self-government ^{so that these could be}

^{clearly} spelled out to the people of the Territory; ~~to ensure that~~

~~they would choose this option;~~ c) ^{in Congress} Extensive Congressional consultation with the Interior, Foreign Relations, and Armed Services committees of the House and Senate;

d) A Congressional resolution, possibly preceded by ^{with the specified options;} hearings, endorsing a plebiscite ~~including all these~~

~~options;~~ e) Informal consultation with the UN Trusteeship

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Council; and f) conduct of a plebiscite.

A major effort would be required with our Congress to accomplish this program but we believe we could succeed if we were to present the question as a matter of urgency stemming from national security considerations. On balance, we think that we would be assisted by the attitude of the Foreign Relations and Armed Services Committees in trying to overcome the complacent tendency of the Interior Committee. We would nevertheless have to act with delicacy since the Interior Committees are jealous of their prerogatives. The essential objective of Congressional consultation would be ~~not only~~ to obtain ~~general endorsement for our procedure but~~ sufficient support for ultimate Congressional endorsement of arrangements chosen by the people of the Trust Territory.

Fallback Position

If Interior insists upon some sort of commission, and we recognize some public relations arguments in favor of a commission, we would be prepared reluctantly to acquiesce in this concept if the commission were Presidentially appointed and ~~was~~ not designed as a substitute for the less formal procedures proposed

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above. In other words, a Presidential commission with a carefully selected chairman might serve as a substitute for Congressional hearings on the subject and help obtain Congressional as well as public support for progress toward self-government of the TTPI.

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