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DISCUSSION PAPER

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SUBJECT: Self-Determination for the Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands

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Problem

1. We have a determination by the JCS that they consider it essential for strategic reasons that the Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands (TTPI) continue to be associated with the United States. We also have an international commitment under our 1947 trusteeship agreement with the UN Security Council to promote the TTPI's independence or self-government. As long as we move promptly we are confident that these requirements can be reconciled by permitting the people of the Territory to exercise their right of self-determination in circumstances which highlight the advantage of the Territory's continued association with us.

2. Our belief is the sooner the TTPI is given an opportunity for self-determination, the sooner we will get from the Micronesians the answer which will best protect our strategic interests. Our failure to move swiftly enough could, however, jeopardize a generally

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F favorable political climate in the Territory. Although local sentiment remains tame by usual standards of anti-colonialism, there has recently been a distinct growth of local interest in the TTPI's political future. We must in any case anticipate keen international scrutiny of our administration by the UN Trusteeship Council which has a visiting mission inspecting the Territory at the present time.

3. Our political position in the TTPI is complicated by the poor job we have done in administering and developing the Territory in past years and by the extent to which this past performance has been publicized. Despite some improvement and fairly widespread recognition in the Government that the resources being devoted to the development of the Territory are insufficient, modest proposals for increased appropriations were not acted upon by the last Congress. However, the proposals have been resubmitted this year, and we have been able to introduce some Peace Corps volunteers who will provide increased assistance in elementary education, public health and community development.

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E Proposed Policy

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4. In broad terms we propose a dual approach toward the TTPI's future. One aspect would be re-invigoration of earlier efforts to accelerate economic development of the Territory to the point that it would underscore the value of association with the U.S. and undercut criticism from various sources. The other would be a defined program for early self-government and self-determination followed by action in the UN effectively terminating the TTPI's trusteeship status.

5. For the political program we favor an early announcement, perhaps by means of a joint Congressional resolution, stating our intention to grant internal self-government to the TTPI within five years followed by a plebiscite on the question of independence or free association with the United States. We think it virtually certain the people of the Territory would choose free association with us, thus ensuring our strategic interest. The trusteeship system would necessarily remain in effect until such a plebiscite.

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6. A plebiscite could also offer an additional option of full integration with the U.S., but we doubt the U.S. Congress would be prepared for this measure in the absence of parallel action on the American territories in the Pacific.

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Feasibility

7. Legally, our proposed procedure would be compatible with the Trusteeship Agreement under which the U.S. has full powers of administration, legislation, and jurisdiction over the TTPI even though we do not possess "sovereignty." Assuming we consulted the UN adequately about our plans and permitted sufficient UN association with the plebiscite, we could end the trusteeship status of the TTPI as soon as the new institutional arrangements were formally approved by the U.S. Congress and the Micronesian Legislature.

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We would in any

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event cease reporting to the UN or receiving UN visiting missions.

8. Politically, our proposed procedure should be satisfactory. The people of the TTPI would almost certainly reject independence if the desired alternative of free association were offered early enough and explained clearly enough to the people of the TTPI. Arrangements involving a substantial delay in the actual achievement of self-government would, of course, significantly reduce the formula's appeal in the UN as well as the Territory. Similarly, failure to spell out the political and economic advantages of free association would probably lead the people of the TTPI to favor the status quo, a tendency which would in large part defeat our purpose.

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Executive Branch Positions

9. Although Interior, which has responsibility for administration of the TTPI, has come to share some of our sense of urgency, it is clearly reluctant to come to grips with the basic issue of the Territory's internal self-government. Apart from the absence of sufficient preparations for rapid political progress in the TTPI,

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[Handwritten mark] Interior seems reluctant to take an initiative in a matter of strong Congressional interest and tends to believe that any program for the Trust Territory must conform to the policies we have followed over the years in dealing with exclusively American territories. Specifically it has great reservations about providing the TTPI with a status better than that now enjoyed by our three non-self-governing territories of Guam, American Samoa, and the Virgin Islands. *release*

10. We appreciate the Congressional problem but are convinced that an Executive initiative is not only proper but essential. Moreover, while we recognize the political difficulties of leapfrogging the TTPI to self-government over the other American territories, we assume the U.S. could make all necessary adjustments within the contemplated five-year period before a final plebiscite in the Trust Territory. We believe Defense shares our view in the belief that the most important objectives are to ensure the TTPI's permanent association with us and to provide the necessary degree of political autonomy which would remove the Territory decisively from UN supervision. *[Handwritten mark]*

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E 11. 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 publicized program for the TTPI. *release*

Interior Proposal

12. Interior has 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 to ascertain their wishes and views and to study and critically assess the political alternatives open to Micronesia." The commission, under Interior's proposal, would include six members from the U.S. Congress, six from the Congress of Micronesia, and three from the Executive Branch with the chairman selected by the President from among members. The purpose would be to determine and publicize the various political alternatives for Micronesia and to make recommendations to the President, the U.S. Congress, and the Congress of Micronesia by mid-1968 or even earlier. *E*

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E Our Proposed Alternatives

13. We do not favor a commission in the form proposed by Interior. A Congressionally-established and Congressionally-dominated commission would have the virtue of involving the U.S. Congress deeply in the process of actually determining a program for the TTPI, but it would also come very close to dumping our Executive Branch responsibilities on the commission without assurance of a satisfactory result. Given the attitude of the Interior Committees in Congress, it is quite possible, for example, that such a commission would fail to recommend the prompt schedule for the TTPI's self-government (as distinct from self-determination) which we would need to end the trusteeship agreement. Moreover, if the commission failed to recognize the sense of urgency, we could not be sure of getting the people of Micronesia to make the right choice in terms of our defense needs.

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14. As an alternative to Interior's proposal we would recommend that : a) the Executive Branch first decide on the desirability of the program described in paragraph 5 above and then conduct an extensive education campaign

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F with the Congress; before b) promoting Congressional backing for a commission appointed by the President. The purpose of the commission would not be to make broad policy recommendations but to define the institutions of self-government and free association for the TTPI within guidelines set in advance by the President in consultation with Congress. A commission along these lines could serve a practical purpose as well as help engage the Congress, the Micronesians and our own public in a new program for Micronesia. *release*

15. Specifically, we would propose that State, Interior, Defense and the White House agree on the following sequence of action: a) explicit Executive Branch agreement on a program of self-government and self-determination within 5 years; b) determination of the key political and economic features (e.g. questions of citizenship and political representation as well as budgetary, tax, and customs arrangements) which must be offered to the TTPI but examined with the U.S. Congress in advance to ensure adequate support; c) extensive Congressional consultation with the Interior, Foreign Relations, and Armed Services committees of the House and Senate; d) a Congressional resolution setting *F*

f) forth the program; e) consultation with the UN Trusteeship Council; and f) implementation of the self-government program and appointment of a Presidential Commission to prepare for the plebiscite.

16. A major effort would be required with the Congress to accomplish this program but we believe we could succeed if we were to present the question as a matter of urgency *release* 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 some tendency toward complacency in the Interior Committees. 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 to obtain sufficient support for ultimate Congressional endorsement of arrangements chosen by the people of the Trust Territory.

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