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Discussion Paper for Meeting with
Interior, Defense, and White House 422

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

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 the 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 that 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 the generally favorable political climate which exists in the Territory today. 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.

Proposed Policy

3. In broad terms we propose a dual approach toward the TTPI's future. One aspect--reflected in current requests for appropriations--would be acceleration of the Territory's economic development to the point that it

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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.

4. For the political program we favor an early announcement, through a concurrent Congressional resolution, stating our intention to develop internal self-government in the TTPI within a period of five years followed by a plebiscite, with appropriate UN participation, 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.

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

Feasibility

6. Whatever the precise arrangements, we would effectively end the trusteeship status of the TTPI after the new institutional arrangements were formally approved by Congress and the Micronesian legislature.

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We could expect some demands to the UN that Micronesia be given the right to "opt out" from its status of free association with the U.S. While our response to these demands might not satisfy our irreconcilable critics, we should be able to accommodate this and other problems through the new institutional arrangements and appropriate public assurances.

7. The proposed procedure should be satisfactory in the TTPI. The people of Micronesia would reject independence if the desired alternative of free association were offered early enough and if the political and economic advantages were explained clearly.

8. Although the status of the Trust Territory under international law and the U.S. constitution differs from that of our other Pacific territories, we should not as a practical matter permit an impression that the Micronesians are being leapfrogged to self government over the American territories of Guam and American Samoa. The five-year period before a final plebiscite in the Trust Territory would allow enough time to avoid any serious problem in this respect.

9. A major effort would be required with the Congress to ensure ultimate endorsement of the program outlined here. We believe, however, that Congressional leaders would accept the program if presented in the context of national security which is our basic consideration.

Specific Program

10. We envisage three initial phases in carrying out this proposed policy for self-government and self-determination in the Trust Territory: first, a decision within the Executive Branch on our precise goals; second, extensive consultations with Congressional leaders to obtain their support for a concurrent resolution outlining such a policy; and third a Presidential commission to work out the specific arrangements of the program agreed upon in advance by the President and Congress.

11. Specifically, we recommend the following steps:
(a) Executive Branch agreement on a progressive program of self-government over a five-year period followed

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by exercise of self-determination through a plebiscite offering Micronesians a choice between free association and independence; (b) identification of the key political and economic features of the program which should be discussed in advance with the Congress to insure adequate support; (c) consultations with the Interior, Foreign Relations and Armed Services Committees of the House and Senate by senior officials of Interior, State, Defense and the White House; (d) adoption of a concurrent Congressional resolution along the lines of the attached draft; (e) appropriate consultations with the UN; (f) appointment of a Presidential commission to recommend specific arrangements for Micronesia's free association with the United States (e.g. citizenship and other political factors as well as budgetary, tax, and customs arrangements); and (g) a concerted effort to accelerate Micronesia's economic development and implement those first steps toward self-government which could be undertaken in advance of the Commission's recommendations.

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