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SOUTH PACIFIC ISLANDS DISCUSSIONS

April 5-6-7, 1967

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VI PACIFIC ISLANDS--FUTURE POLITICAL SHAPE OF THE AREA

Background

1. The extremely disparate nature of the Pacific Islands region, the vast differences in levels of political and social development among the various island groups and the complex framework of sovereignties combine to make this a difficult area to assess in terms of regional political development.
2. The Pacific territories under United States administration-- American Samoa, Guam and the Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands (Micronesia)--differ among themselves in political development. Administered by the Department of the Interior and subject to close Congressional scrutiny, our policy toward these areas involves national security and domestic considerations quite apart from their effect on our foreign relations. The formation and implementation of our policy is, therefore, quite different from that involving policy toward non-US territories of the Pacific. At the same time, our policies toward the US-administered territories have a direct impact on, and should be compatible with, our policies toward the other Pacific territories.
3. Political independence of the Pacific Islands region or any part thereof is not necessarily in our national interest. With the exception of Western Samoa, the entire non-US region is under some degree of control by one of the other four administering powers allied to the United States. Since World War II these powers have been able to keep the region stable, except for a few isolated minor incidents, and insulated from communist penetration.
4. Our present security interests would perhaps best be served by indefinite continuation of some relationship with the present administering authorities. It is highly unlikely that the status quo could be maintained in the region for very long in view of the fact that the dynamic changes which have transformed Asia and Africa since 1945 have also affected the Pacific. Pressures for more self-government or complete independence are coming from within and from without the area.

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REVIEWED BY: B.H. BAAS DATE 3/25/81

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US attitudes on future of area:

5. We recognize that pressures for change in British, Australian and NZ Pacific areas are perhaps greater than in the US administered area; that such developments are inevitable and necessary.
6. While we realize that the non-US areas cannot proceed at the same pace we would encourage properly timed measures by the metropolitan governments to implement the political, economic and social adjustments necessary to meet the growing needs and aspirations of the Pacific Islands without sacrificing the essential interests of the western alliance in the region.
7. The US does not seek to administer any areas other than those which it now administers. US policy in its own areas is expected to follow historical patterns--a strengthened relationship between the US and the territories and increased self-government with the possibility of some form of territorial participation in the US Congress.
8. Notwithstanding the example of the Philippines, US historical precedent would not anticipate independence for its territories. We question whether it is inevitable or desirable that complete independence should be given to other small, scattered, non-viable territories. Rapid population growth and lack of natural resources, moreover, will only tend to accentuate their political ambitions unless some reasonable substitute for complete independence is given.
9. The US recognizes that the Commonwealth countries have undertaken some successful joint endeavors in the South Pacific--such as the South Pacific Health Service and hopes that such cooperation will be expanded. There is opportunity to do so in the projected University of the South Pacific in Fiji. Other such joint endeavors might include, for example, projects on family planning, communications, transportation, marketing arrangements and the pooling of technical training facilities. One of the greatest needs is for development capital.
10. Australia and New Zealand especially should be encouraged to play more active and responsible roles in the economic development of the Pacific Islands in view of their own considerable economic and strategic interests.
11. As an immediate measure, the five administering authorities should make the South Pacific Commission more responsive to the wishes of the people by granting them more representation on the Commission itself

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and more responsibility for making decisions affecting their welfare. Such reorganization should be sought within the existing framework of the Commission's present Charter in order to keep the SPC truly regional in character. (The USG also would not want to accept changes in the Agreement of a major character that would require Congressional approval.)

Attitude of Administering Authorities

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French-British Condominium of the New Hebrides

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New Zealand

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-7-

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Future Political Shape of the Area

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