



UNITED STATES  
DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY  
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20240

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JUN 30 1967

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Dear Mr. Katzenbach:

The Territorial and Insular Affairs Subcommittee of the House Interior and Insular Affairs Committee has scheduled a hearing for July 21, on H. J. Res. 594, a joint resolution "To establish the Commission on the Future Political Status of the Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands (Micronesia)." The Committee has stated that it will insist at this time that the Secretary of the Interior, or his designee, address himself to the question of the political future of the Trust Territory and that he present a definitive Executive Branch position.

In order to do so, we have prepared two documents, copies of which are enclosed, on which we would appreciate having your concurrence or comments at the earliest possible date. The first of these is a proposed report on H. J. Res. 594, with enclosures, stating in substance that we approve in general of the approach of the bill, but that we recommend instead enactment of the joint resolution on which the three interested Departments have already concurred.

The second enclosure is a proposed memorandum to the President, outlining the problem which has concerned our Departments and recommending that he authorize me to transmit to the Congress our proposed report offering our Joint Resolution "Regarding the Status of the Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands", as a substitute measure.

The Bureau of the Budget has asked us to prepare the memorandum to the President and further has requested that we obtain your concurrence or comments thereon. To permit the development of a position for the July 21 hearing, we shall need to move very rapidly, and I will therefore need to hear from you by no later than July 10.

Sincerely yours,

*Charles F. Lucas*

Acting

Secretary of the Interior

Enclosures

Hon. Nicholas deB. Katzenbach  
Under Secretary of State  
Department of State  
Washington, D.C. 20520

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HARRY DELASHMUTE, CHIEF  
BRANCH OF SECURITY, DOI  
SIGNED:

*Harry Delashmute*

This letter is declassified when enclosures are detached.

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UNITED STATES  
DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY  
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20240

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MEMORANDUM FOR THE PRESIDENT

The popularly elected legislature of the Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands, known as the Congress of Micronesia, formally asked you last August to appoint a commission to study the political future of the Trust Territory. Several key members of the Congress of the United States have expressed a similar interest in the Territory's future. Prior to these actions, the three interested Departments of State, Defense, and Interior had been exploring the matter. They have now developed for your approval draft legislation which would result in a seventeen member commission, nine to be appointed by you, and the remainder to be chosen from members of the U. S. Congress.

I recommend that you authorize me to transmit such legislation to the Congress. I further recommend that you sign the attached letter to the Speaker of the Congress of Micronesia, stating that you have acted upon the Congress' request.

The interested Departments agree that

-- the strategic interests of the United States require that the Trust Territory be placed in close and permanent political association with the United States.

-- a close, permanent association can only be achieved by an early plebiscite, in which the people of the Trust Territory indicate their desire to so associate.

-- such a plebiscite must be held very soon, in order to take advantage of what we assess to be current sentiment strongly in favor of association with the United States.

-- delay would probably result in a less favorable plebiscite, which in turn could jeopardize our security interests and create substantial international embarrassment.

-- the form of any political association between the U. S. and the Trust Territory must, under Article IV of the U. S. Constitution, ultimately be determined by the U. S. Congress. It is thus desirable to involve the U. S. Congress as early as possible in the question of the form of the political association (e.g., Statehood, commonwealth status, territorial

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status). Such involvement can most effectively be achieved by means of a commission as contemplated by the proposed bill. Members of the Commission who are members of the U. S. Congress can be expected ultimately to be helpful in persuading the Congress to accept the Commission's recommendations.

Because the House Committee on Interior and Insular Affairs has scheduled a hearing for July 21 on H. J. Res. 594, a resolution to establish a Commission on the Future Political Status of the Trust Territory, and has asked for comments from all three Departments, it is timely that I transmit to the Committee as a substitute measure the attached proposed bill, upon which the three Departments agree.

The three Departments have varying interests, and I do not believe that any commission, or the U. S. Congress, will be able wholly to reconcile them.

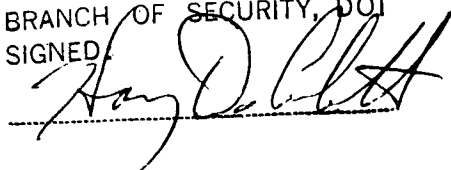
The Defense Department's conclusions concerning the strategic importance of the area and the need to insure continuing United States control over it are free from argument within the Executive Branch. I know of no substantial disagreement from members of the Congress.

The State Department's view is that, in order to resolve the Trust Territory's political future, the United States is required by the terms of our treaty with the United Nations to confer substantial self-government, one requisite of which is a popularly elected chief executive, upon the people of the Territory. Any attempt to do less would, State says, result in our violation of an international commitment.

The Interior Department, as the agency responsible for civil administration of the Trust Territory, believes that the people of the Territory are not yet prepared for the full measure of self-government which the State Department regards as essential. I believe that the Congress of the United States would concur in Interior's view and would be, with few if any exceptions among its members, unwilling to permit the Trust Territory to elect its own Governor either now or in the next several years.

There is no course of action available to the U. S. Government which is free from serious risks.

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1. If the Executive Branch does nothing, we risk a deterioration in pro-U.S. sentiment in the Trust Territory, ultimately to be proved with clarity and embarrassment in a plebiscite. We further perpetuate our unattractive stance as the administrator of one of the three remaining trusteeships on earth.

2. If the Executive Branch proposes to the Congress legislation designed to confer that degree of self government upon the Trust Territory which the State Department believes essential for the purpose of terminating the Trusteeship Agreement, we risk legislative failure, with the attendant domestic embarrassment, plus the even more serious embarrassment arising when the people of the Trust Territory are publicly rebuffed. It is the Interior Department's view that such legislative failure would be likely.

3. If the Executive Branch proposes a study commission, and if you provide guidelines to it in order to assure that its report will be acceptable in the United Nations when measured against our international commitments, the Congressional members of the commission may be non-supportive. While they need to know and will want to know the nature of our international commitment, and the results which would follow if we were to violate it, they are likely to believe themselves competent to weigh those considerations with all others relevant. It is Interior's belief that we could not anticipate legislative support.

4. If the Executive Branch proposes a study commission without substantive constraints upon it, such commission might recommend that the Trust Territory be accorded the status of a non-self-governing territory of the United States. Such a status would probably perpetuate, but to a lesser degree than at present, UN scrutiny of the area (as is currently the case with respect to our non-self-governing territories of the Virgin Islands, Guam, and American Samoa, upon which we report annually to the UN, but which are not subject to inspection by visiting missions), and it would probably leave the status of our trusteeship agreement unsettled. These results could also follow from other possible commission recommendations. The commission would also be free to recommend self-governing status.

My recommendation is that we proceed in the manner last outlined. The proposed bill, for which I seek your approval, would launch this approach. Although the course presents hazards, I know of no way to avoid them while still achieving the political association which is vital to our security interests.

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*[Handwritten Signature]*

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The Departments of State and Defense have each advised me of their concurrence in this memorandum.

Secretary of the Interior

Enclosure

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*Harry Delashmutt*

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04- 425879

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To the Speaker, House of Representatives  
Congress of Micronesia . . .

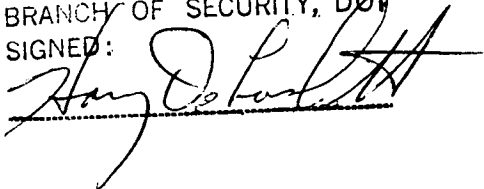
Dear Mr. Speaker:

The Congress of Micronesia's House Joint Resolution No. 47, adopted during its second regular session in 1966, asks that I establish a Commission to study the political future of the Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands. Upon the recommendation of the Secretary of the Interior, I am prepared to do so. I have today authorized the Secretary to transmit to the Congress of the United States proposed legislation looking toward the establishment of such a Commission.

Sincerely yours,

President

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