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OFFICE OF THE
SECRETARY OF DEFENSE

JCSM-643-68
31 October 1968

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MEMORANDUM FOR THE SECRETARY OF DEFENSE

Subject: Strategic Importance of the Trust Territory
of the Pacific Islands (U)

1. (S) Reference is made to:

a. A memorandum by the Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense (ISA), I-11241/68, dated 31 August 1968, on the above subject, which stated that it is time to start preparation for alternative initiatives, should the Status Commission not be established, and which requested a statement by the Joint Chiefs of Staff defining the strategic importance of the Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands (TTPI).

b. JCSM-88-65, dated 5 February 1965, subject: "US Control of the Territory of Guam and the Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands (U)," in which the Joint Chiefs of Staff discussed the strategic importance of the TTPI and expressed concern regarding the events and trends in foreign countries and the United Nations affecting US relationships with Guam and the TTPI. They recommended that these views be presented to the President, the Secretary of State, and, as appropriate, to the Secretary of the Interior.

c. JCSM-441-68, dated 11 July 1968, subject: "Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands Political Status (U)," in which the Joint Chiefs of Staff recommended that an inter-agency group develop, at an early date, a national policy paper or a comparable document which would address the various courses of action necessary to secure an early and favorable plebiscite in the TTPI.

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2. (S) With respect to the strategic importance of the TTPI, it is the view of the Joint Chiefs of Staff that:

a. The security of the United States will continue to depend in large part on US ability to monitor and control, as necessary, the sea and air space of the Pacific Ocean area and to meet and counter communist strength in the forward Asian-Pacific regions. The TTPI, under US sovereignty, would contribute to the accomplishment of these objectives.

b. It is essential, upon cessation of hostilities in South Vietnam, that redeployment of US Forces assures a US military force posture which will permit rapid and decisive reaction to any Asian communist aggression. For this reason, the posthostilities posture of US Forces could be enhanced significantly by the option for military bases and associated facilities in the TTPI.

c. The United States should continue to oppose any withdrawal of US Forces from our present Pacific forward base structure. However, if the intensifying political pressures cause future denial or curtailment in the use of our forward bases, the TTPI provides the only real estate, with the exception of Guam, on which the required capability to project US power into the western Pacific could be based. Current US control of the TTPI, favorable balance of payments considerations, and potential for US sovereignty offer the possibilities of long-term stability required for planning and development of a base structure. This is increasingly important with the withdrawal of UK Forces east of Suez.

d. Denial or restriction of some or all forward bases in Korea, the Ryukyus, Taiwan, and the Philippines could require relocation of nuclear weapons storage sites to Guam and/or the TTPI. In view of the limited room for expansion on Guam, the TTPI affords options for dispersed storage of munitions and selected war reserve materiel. The vulnerability of our Asian and WESTPAC bases to the increasing CHICOM nuclear capability heightens the value of dispersal. Additionally, adequate storage facilities in the TTPI could allow reduction of stocks at non-US locations which could reduce US foreign exchange expenditures.

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e. Kwajalein and Eniwetok will remain strategically significant in view of facilities associated with DOD research and development programs.

f. In addition to the strategic importance of the TTPI for future US military development, the location and expanse of the TTPI make it imperative that we continue to deny these islands to possible enemies. The TTPI, in the hands of unfriendly powers, would present a formidable threat to the security of the United States. In particular, the vulnerability of Guam, surrounded by the TTPI, would be significantly increased.

5. (S) The Joint Chiefs of Staff reaffirm their views on the strategic importance of the TTPI provided in reference lb, as updated in the Appendix hereto. They note with concern that we do not appear to be any nearer to the achievement of the US goal of moving the TTPI into a permanent relationship within the political framework of the United States than we were when the policy was announced by NSAM 145 in April 1962. Further, the Joint Chiefs of Staff note with concern that many of the areas considered for civilian development are also areas that would have the greatest potential for military bases and associated facilities. Accordingly, the Joint Chiefs of Staff agree that alternative initiatives to accomplish US policy regarding the TTPI should be sought as a matter of urgency.

For the Joint Chiefs of Staff:



K. L. REAVES

Major General, USA
Vice Director, Joint Staff

Attachment

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