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November 15, 1968

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TO: The Acting Secretary
THROUGH: S/S
FROM: IO - Joseph J. Sisco
SUBJECT: Proposal for a Task Force to Visit the Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands (TTPI). ACTION MEMORANDUM

DEPARTMENT OF STATE ATC/DC/MR	
REVIEWED BY	B. H. BAAS DATE 3/25/87
RDS <input type="checkbox"/> or XDS <input type="checkbox"/> EXP. DATE	_____
TS AUTH.	REASON(S) _____
ENDORSE EXISTING MARKINGS	<input type="checkbox"/>
DECLASSIFIED <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> RELEASABLE <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
RELEASE DENIED	<input type="checkbox"/>
PA or FOI EXEMPTIONS	_____

In my absence at USUN, Dave Popper represented the Department at a meeting in Harry McPherson's office on November 14, to consider a proposal for the early despatch to Micronesia of a special Presidential Task Force. (We understand, confidentially, that the proposal originated with Fred K. Fox, who is promoting business enterprises in the TTPI). Interior (Harry Anderson), Defense (Earle), Bureau of the Budget (Hyde), and the NSC were also represented.

The proposal under consideration calls for a small group to visit and travel in the Trust Territory to impress upon the inhabitants the U.S. Government's interest in their welfare and political advancement. The purpose would be to arrest the deterioration in the political atmosphere in the TTPI by an act involving both the President and the President-elect, thus giving the Islanders reason to believe that they will not be forgotten in the transfer from one Administration to another. The Task Force might be headed by Senator Inouye, with a Nixon man as No. 2 or Co-Chairman; it would include one man each from the House and Senate Interior Committees, and a public member who might be Fred Fox.

With varying degrees of emphasis, State, Defense, and Interior expressed reservations about this proposal. The Interior view was that a Task Force representing a lame duck Administration would not be helpful; that unless the proposal were cleared with a member of the Senate Interior Committee (perhaps Senator Jackson; Inouye is not a member) and unless

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Chairman Aspinall of the House Interior and Insular Affairs Committee were brought aboard, there might be Congressional difficulties; and that the TIPI had recently been deluged with Stateside visitors. On the other hand, Anderson thought that a group going on behalf of the new Administration at an early date, even before January 20, might have a good effect.

State and Defense pointed out that a Task Force which could bring with it nothing but generalized expressions of good intentions might be counterproductive; that Congressman Aspinall's reaction to such a move by the Executive might be adverse; that if the point was to prevent the new Administration from losing sight of the TIPI problem, this could be done through transition papers or special briefings for incoming officials; and that the end result might be actually to delay the despatch of the kind of Status Commission we thought desirable.

Harry McPherson said he saw both advantages and disadvantages in the proposal. It would give evidence of Presidential interest and good faith, and engage the new Administration's interest. The Task Force could take a reading on the present sentiment of the TIPI people and convey its findings back to the President and Congress. On the other hand, he recognized that there were some risks.

McPherson has asked Charles Johnson of the White House staff, who was present, to prepare the proposal for consideration by the President, perhaps this weekend. He did not know how the President would react. As alternatives to a Task Force, he would mention the possibility of a Presidential letter to High Commissioner Norwood, and a suggestion that the President-elect designate a single individual to visit the TIPI, with appropriate escort, to ensure the inhabitants of continuing United States interest in their future.

McPherson indicated that the paper, when prepared, should be shown to Walt Rostow. Dave Popper said that you might also have an interest. We have asked Charles Johnson to suggest to Mr. McPherson that he talk with you before the proposal is firmed up. Concurrence by the President-elect or his representative would of course be required.

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Recommendation:

(1) That you indicate to Harry McPherson our reservations regarding the proposal, as described above.

(2) That if the proposal is nevertheless approved, the Department cooperate in preparing the Task Force, perhaps in conjunction with Ambassador Robert Murphy.

IO:DHPopper:jag
11/15/68

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