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One aspect of UN consideration of Pacific territories on which the four countries could appropriately coordinate their policies is the question of visiting missions (VM's) to these areas by the UN's Committee of 24. While New Zealand, UK, Australia and the U.S. apparently agree that such VM's are undesirable, they are unable to agree on a uniform response to requests from the Committee that they receive VM's.

BACKGROUND

Since its establishment, the Committee of 24 has frequently requested administering authorities (AA's) to receive visiting missions to their non-self-governing territories (NSGT's) to examine the conditions there and report on progress toward the implementation of GA Res 1514 (the "Colonialism Declaration"). Recently the Committee made a blanket request asking all administering authorities to accept VM's.

Thus far Spain has been the only AA to cooperate; it received a VM to Equatorial Guinea in 1966 and has agreed to a 1967 VM to Spanish Sahara. Australia has invited several Committee of 24 representatives to visit Papua and New Guinea. Responses to Committee of 24 requests to send VM's to Pacific Territories have varied. The UK has replied that it will consider requests for VM's on a case by case basis only, thus sidestepping a direct reply. The Australian response has been that the Trusteeship Council dispatches missions to its Trust Territories regularly and that its only NSGT, the Cocos (Keeling) Islands is too small to merit a UN VM.

DEPARTMENT OF STATE A/CDC/MR

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REVIEWED BY B. H. RAAS DATE 3/25/87

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U.S. POSITION

To date, the U.S. has informally refused requests that it receive VM's to its NSGT's on the following grounds: (1) In accordance with our Charter obligations we regularly submit information on developments in our NSGT's, including information on political developments, and there is no obligation to accept VM's; (2) U.S. Territories are part of an open society, and little additional information could be developed through a VM which is not already available in U.S. reports to the UN, the press, public proceedings of the U.S. Congress and of the territorial legislatures; (3) The U.S. has believed that it ought to attempt to coordinate its position on VM's with its allies who so far have shown no interest in receiving them; (4) For the U.S. to receive VM's in our NSGT's would undoubtedly provoke strong criticism in the territories and in the press and in the Congress.

The U.S. expects to respond to the Committee's latest request that the U.S. receive VM's by pointing out that we submit complete information on our dependent territories and that this information, combined with other freely available public information, provides a full picture on territorial developments. As appropriate we are prepared to state that the USG and the governments of the territories are ready to extend official courtesies to individual UN representatives who may wish to visit U.S. territories, subject, of course, to applicable travel regulations.

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