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TO : DEPARTMENT OF STATE

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FROM : Amembassy CANBERRA

DATE: February 28, 1969

SUBJECT: Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands

REF : State 004541

Professor James Davidson, constitutional advisor to the Micronesian Congress's Future Political Status Commission, recently returned to Canberra from the Trust Territory. The enclosed memcon, recording some of his impressions and views, may be of interest to State and Interior.

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MEMORANDUM OF CONVERSATION

PARTICIPANTS: Professor James Davidson, Advisor to Micronesian Status Commission; also Head of Pacific History Department, Australian National University
John C. Dorrance, Political Officer, American Embassy

DATE: February 26, 1969

SUBJECT: TTPI - Political Developments and Role of Status Commission

Professor Davidson has just returned to Canberra from the Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands where he is serving as constitutional advisor to the Micronesian Congress's Future Political Status Commission. During a luncheon conversation he volunteered the following impressions and comments.

1. Davidson said that he believes the Commission's invitation for him to serve as constitutional advisor stemmed from his similar role in 1967 and 68 with the Nauruans. Commission member Amata Kabua and other Micronesian Congressmen met Davidson on Nauru during the independence celebrations in January, 1968 and had several long conversations on constitutional and political development at that time. Subsequently there was correspondence between Commission members and himself. He said that Norman Meller, Professor of Political Science at the University of Hawaii, had also been considered for the position, but had been rejected as tending to "think and talk too much in abstract constitutional principle." He (Davidson), on the other hand, had impressed the Micronesians with his more practical approach to the problems that face the TTPI.
2. Davidson's appointment is open-ended. Although technically the Status Commission's work will be completed when it submits its final report about next July, he anticipates that it or some similar Committee will continue to function--primarily to follow up on the final report with the Departments of Interior, State, and the Congress in Washington.
3. The forthcoming trip of the Commission through the South Pacific and Australia was encouraged by Davidson. He believes that

it will be useful to expose the Micronesians to ideas and concepts beyond their own experience in the Trust Territory, and to expose them to the problems and responsibilities of self-government.

4. Neither he nor the Commission has any fixed leanings toward a particular form of association with the U.S. (or independence) at this time. He did mention the following straws in the wind:

a) Among the six Committee members, Amata Kabua and Tosiwo Nakayama favor independence. They believe that the problem of financing an independent Micronesia can be met by soaking the U.S. Government for base rights, and through development of tourism and fisheries resources. Davidson said that these two (and many other Micronesian leaders he met) had been influenced in their thinking about independence by Peace Corps volunteers.

b) Aside from the two Committee members who desire independence, Davidson found a fairly significant minority of other Micronesians who favor that political course. Nevertheless, a very ~~solid majority of both leaders and average Micronesians still~~ favor association with the U.S.

c) Among the leaders who fall in the latter category, Davidson said the main concern is to achieve a form of association which will not result in "Americanization" of Micronesia, which will permit the development of a distinctly Micronesian political, social, and economic entity, and, most importantly, will permit the Micronesians to control the nature and location of U.S. military activities in Micronesia. He said a main concern of most articulate leaders is that the U.S. might be forced out of Okinawa and the Philippines, and then turn the whole of Micronesia into a massive defense complex. In other words, the Micronesians, in reaching agreement with Washington on a form of association, want a clear delineation of present or existing defense activity, and a veto on future activity. (The reporting officer commented on a personal basis that association implied U.S. sovereignty, and therefore full U.S. responsibility in the area of defense and foreign affairs. The Micronesians were asking for something that none of the States, other territories, or Puerto Rico have.)

d) Davidson remarked that many of the Micronesian leaders he spoke to have indicated that they are quite prepared to use such leverage as they have in the UN to obtain a degree of control over U.S. military activity in a self-governing Micronesia.

e) Davidson also commented that he considers independence as being more than a theoretical alternative. Although he personally favors some form of loose association, he believes that Micronesia could become a viable independent state assuming that the U.S. would be prepared to pay for the use of bases in Micronesia--both directly in the form of rent and indirectly in the form of aid. He says that treaty guarantees could be arranged with independence to assure that no other power would have access to the territory for military or similar activities.

5. The reporting officer asked whether Davidson or the Committee had, at this point, any ideas on the form of government which might evolve in the Territory. Davidson said that he certainly was not thinking in terms of the British Westminster system. To the contrary, he felt a strong and separate executive branch was required. However, because of regional jealousies, there might be a need for fixed regional representation at the Chief Executive level; perhaps there could be an Executive Committee with a rotating chairman.

6. Davidson said that the Committee in its final report, due about June, might also propose some form of "constitutional convention." The convention would not actually attempt to draw up a constitution, but rather would attempt to educate a wide cross-section of elected representatives on the findings of the Committee and attempt to arrive at some consensus as to the political and constitutional course the Trust Territory might seek to take. The reporting officer pointed out this could be dangerous ground. The U.S. Congress would ultimately have to enact legislation to place into effect the results of any act of self-determination, including the implementation of any form of association. It was therefore essential that at some stage the U.S. Congress be consulted on forms and terms of association. Davidson said he was aware of this problem and believed that he and the Committee should, in the not-too-distant future, go to Washington--to "educate the U.S. Congress, and to educate ourselves."

7. Davidson also volunteered comment on the TTPI administration and Peace Corps operation. With regard to the latter, he said that he was quite impressed with their performance, and with the caliber of most of the volunteers. He said that a number of Micronesians had expressed unqualified admiration of their work

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and relationships between volunteers and Micronesians. However, Davidson added, some volunteers were undoubtedly doing damage by giving rather unsophisticated and naive political advice on the issue of independence. As to the administration, he said that, although there were some qualified and dedicated personnel, he was not impressed with the majority that he had met. He felt that in particular too little is being done by these people and the administration in general to localize the public service.

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