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UNDER SECRETARIES MEETING MARCH 24

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Comments on the Department of the Interior  
Briefing Paper on the TTPI

Although any detailed discussion of the Interior paper on the Future of the TTPI rightly belongs to the working group which will examine all aspects of this problem, there are several blind spots in Interior's position as reflected in this paper, which are worth pointing out.

1. Interior quotes freely from the Trusteeship Agreement as to the extent of control and power which the Agreement gives to the United States, but no where in the paper is there mention of our ultimate responsibility as set forth in Article 6 of the Agreement: the US "shall promote the development of the inhabitants of the trust territory toward self-government or independence, as may be appropriate to the particular circumstances of the trust territory and its peoples and the freely expressed wishes of the peoples concerned." This article is of key importance in defining our legal obligations as to the Territory's political future. The slighting of this point is reflected in Interior's presentation of the State Department's views regarding the nature of the TTPI's association with the US in terms of "hopes" for self-government "to meet our needs at the UN." This is hardly an accurate description of our international obligations.

2. In discussing its own views toward self-government, Interior dwells on two points: (a) the limited willingness of Congress to grant self-government, and (b) its belief that such self-government may exceed the capacity of the Micronesians. We have repeatedly made clear to Interior in the past that there would be considerable latitude in the content of any arrangements for self-government. We have acknowledged that any terms must be in accord with the real limits imposed by Interior's concerns, but it is equally true that the arrangement must meet the minimum legal definitions and the political requirements of the Micronesian voters.

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3. Finally, Interior asks if the Micronesians might not be offered a choice of either association with the US or the status quo. The answer is clearly no. Whatever their real view of independence as a viable status for the islands, we have no reason to believe that the Micronesians would forsake an option which provides the source of much of their political leverage. Moreover, if such a restricted choice were put to the Micronesians there is every reason to believe that they would want to maintain their trusteeship status and the advantages which it gives them, in terms of a forum for complaints and so on, unless they were obviously being offered a better arrangement.

I might add that we would not propose to rebut the Interior position in the above fashion at this afternoon's meeting. These points, and others of more detail, would seem better left to the working group for solution or, if need be, referral back to the full Committee for resolution.

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