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Almost two years of study, discussion and travel by the Congress of Micronesia's Future Political Status Commission came to a climax in Palau Thursday evening when the Commission presented its first official public recommendations for a possible new status for the Trust Territory.

In a special night session of the Palau Legislature, Senator Lazarus Salii of Palau, Commission Chairman, pointed out that after considering as many as twelve political possibilities, the Status Commission has 'reduced the desirable alternatives to two and from among these two, we have chosen one.' The one official recommendation, Senator Salii announced, is that the Trust Territory should become a free associated state, that is, a state that would be internally self-governing with Micronesian control over all the branches of government, including the executive. Further, this Micronesian state would maintain association with the United States of America providing 'human, material and financial support and representation and protection in international affairs. This recommended status for Micronesia is similar to the self-government which exists today in Puerto Rico and the Cook Islands. Speaking on, Palauan Senator Salii told the Legislature that if future negotiations with the United States toward the establishment of a free associated state of Micronesia would fail, the second alternative would be for independence. 'Independence', Senator Salii said, 'might be economic hardship and administrative difficulties, and thus it is not the first alternative we recommend, but if it is impossible to renew our partnership with the United States as an associated state, the Political Status Commission

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feels that independence would be the only road left open to us. One of the most lasting contributions of the American administration in Micronesia has been the planting of the idea of democratic, representative constitutional government. Our recommendation of a free associated state is indissolubly linked with this idea,' Senator Salif emphasized. 'We chose a free state because the continuation of a colonial kind of status would prove degrading to Micronesians and unworthy of America. Furthermore, in recommending free association with the United States we seek not an end but a re-definition, renewal and improvement of our 22 year old partnership with America. Then this partnership must be joined by our wish to live as Micronesia, to maintain our Micronesian identity, to create a Micronesia state,' the Senator noted. 'The basic ownership of these islands rests with Micronesians and so does the basic responsibility for governing them,' he said.

The Status Commission called for continued American assistance and presence in Micronesia, but added that Micronesians have an item of material value to offer the United States: the use of their land,' he observed. 'But as a self-governing state in free association with the United States we would accept the necessity of such military needs and we could feel confident that Micronesia could enter into responsible negotiations with the military endeavoring to meet American requirements while protecting our Micronesian interests.

As a self-governing state we would be far more prepared than a Trust Territory to face the disadvantages of military use of our land,' the Senator said. The 44 members of the Palau Legislature, with the 16 chief non-voting Chiefs seated in two long rows on the left of the huge audience

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hall, seemed to meet the Commission's recommendations with quiet consideration and caution. Legislature Reckacher Ngirayobei of Ngerchlong asked the Commission whether it was possible for people of the different cultures of Micronesia to ever become united into a state. Senator Tosiwo Makayama of Truk replied that a new sense of oneness and mutual feeling of being Micronesians can be seen among the students from different districts who live together in colleges outside Micronesia and within certain high schools in the Territory. Likewise, the territory-wide instruction in English is already bringing future Micronesian leaders together under one language. Senator Makayama added that a strong central government must be formed if Micronesia seeks to exist as a unit.

The Congress of Micronesia is doing all it can to choose the kind of government that will guarantee this strength and unity, the Truk Senator said. Rep. John Mangelfel of Yap assured the Palauan Legislature that the Congress has no intention of doing away with local districts. 'We can speak English when we want to be unified,' he said, 'and speak the local languages when we want to preserve our differences.' Further, he pointed out that the existence of the district legislatures and the Congress of Micronesia shows that unity and district differences can operate together. Chief Uong of Ngirwal later agreed with Rep. Mangelfel's comment.

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