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DEPARTMENT OF STATE

Washington, D.C. 20520

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September 27, 1971

MEMORANDUM

TO : Ambassador Hummel  
Chairman, Inter-agency Group

FROM : IO/UNP - John A. Armitage *JA*

SUBJECT: Comments on Interior Paper on Marianas  
Separatism

The following represents the substance of comments passed directly by Sam Peale to Tom Whittington concerning Interior's paper on Marianas separatism. We do not believe that Interior has any major difficulties with these comments; they are stated here only for the record and the information of other members of the Inter-agency Group.

We would in general support the preferred objective of unification between the Northern Marianas and Guam should a separate status solution for the Marianas District become necessary or advisable. We can also appreciate the possible difficulties (including the problem of how to handle the Virgin Islands) of offering the combined territory some form of commonwealth.

We must stress, however, the problem that would arise if we attempted to integrate the Northern Marianas with Guam in the latter's present political status. It is generally acknowledged that Micronesia -- either as a whole or in its various parts -- can only achieve self-determination and termination of the trusteeship through a status of self-government (or independence). Guam, however, by our own admission to the United Nations, is a non-self-governing

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territory (NSGT). Therefore, if we join the Northern Marianas with Guam as it is presently constituted, we will by definition have failed to meet the obligations of the Trusteeship Agreement.

It has been argued that we should have declared both Guam and the Virgin Islands as self-governing last November when they elected their own governors for the first time. We would point out three problems with that position, however. First, in the case of NSGTs the UN standard is "a full measure of self-government." (The standard for trust territories omits the words "full measure"). Without the right to vote for President or any representation in the U.S. Congress (not even a non-voting delegate), it would be difficult to make the claim that either territory has such a status. (Note: Puerto Rico had a non-voting delegate when we announced its achievement of self-government in 1953 and Alaska and Hawaii were fully integrated into the Union).

Second, in addition to achieving a certain political status, an act of self-determination is a generally accepted requirement, preferably with UN observers. The U.K. failed to make such a provision for the West Indies Associated States (whose status the Micronesians so admire) and as a result finds the UN still insisting that these territories have not exercised their right of self-determination.

Finally, regardless of the merits, we did not make such a claim to the UN concerning either territory in 1971; we have continued to report on both Guam and the Virgin Islands as non-self-governing territories. We cannot now convincingly reverse that position unless we have some further element -- preferably of both self-government and self-determination to cite to the United Nations. (Note: The decision not to act was not taken lightly. In 1970, we seriously considered, with the Department of the Interior, taking steps, including a referendum on the November ballot, which would have given us a basis for reporting the achievement of self-government

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to the United Nations. It was largely at the behest of the White House, concerned with problems relating to the political situation in the Virgin Islands, that we decided to defer such action until a later date).

The consequences of the above situation in terms of the Marianas separatism issue need not be unduly troublesome. We wish to move Guam and the Virgin Islands into the category of self-governing territories in any case; this will only give us additional incentive. It would be preferable to take some steps in that direction, however, before we make any public endorsement of reunification. We would hope, for example, that we might be able to secure passage of the non-voting delegate bills for both territories now before the U.S. Congress. We would also wish to discuss with leaders in both territories the possibilities for some form of referendum which would result in an endorsement of the relationship between the territories and the United States. Once such steps were underway - even if not completed - it would be possible to plan publicly for reunification, making clear it would not take place before Guam had achieved "a full measure of self-government" and approved this status in an act of self-determination.

In terms of the October talks, the above conditions should not prove unduly restrictive. Interior has with considerable justification indicated that it believes the reunification idea should in any case be discussed with Guam first. Therefore, even if separate discussions with the Marianas representatives should occur, they would have to be general. Immediately after the talks, we could move simultaneously on both fronts - to discuss reunification with Guam and to plan for achievement of self-determination.

We should note that we do not necessarily expect full UN endorsement of our claims regarding Guam and the Virgin Islands - nor is such endorsement required in the case of NSGTs. We will be able to present a credible case, however, arguing that their status is not dissimilar to that achieved by Puerto Rico and approved by the UN in 1952-53.

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If we invite UN observers to the act of self-determination, we would stand a reasonable chance of avoiding condemnation, even if we did not get a ringing endorsement. In any case, we would no longer be in a situation, where by our own definition and admission, we would be failing to meet our obligations in terminating the trust. As with most other conceivable status solutions, the situation in the UN would not be easy, but it should not be impossible.

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