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Proposed Congressional Consultations

The Executive Branch is committed to consult with the House Interior Committee before proceeding with the next steps on the Micronesian political status problem. In addition, owing to the far-reaching nature of some of these steps, consultations with the Congressional leadership and other key committees will probably be required.

It is proposed that these consultations be undertaken jointly by the three departments under Department of the Interior leadership, subject to direction by the Under Secretaries Committee. White House assistance may be required to gain the concurrence of key Congressional figures in these proposals and their limits. (We foresee a problem in protecting our negotiating position against unauthorized disclosure; except for a few senior

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members of Congress whose support will be essential, consultations will be conducted in more general terms designed to seek reactions to a range of alternatives.)

The U.S. Congress can be expected to have difficulties with these proposals for several reasons:

- The variety of views within the Congress on the status issue: for example, some are concerned that the islands may eventually slip out of the U.S. orbit; others are disturbed by the international and domestic repercussions of limiting Micronesia's choices for self-determination; still others may oppose in principle the continuation of these overseas obligations;
- Congressional concerns as to the nature of the precedents created by a loose Commonwealth relationship, particularly the

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implications for Puerto Rico and other U.S. territories of such an arrangement;

-- The long-term financial costs to the United States associated with the permanent assumption of responsibility for foreign peoples, who have few historic ties to the United States and will be unable to support themselves over the foreseeable future.

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Enclosures:

- Tab A - Summary of Options
- Tab B - Report of Interagency
Committee
- Tab C - Proposed Congressional
Consultations

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