



United States Department of the Interior

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FACT SHEET

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(REVISED)

Subject:

FUTURE POLITICAL STATUS
OF THE TRUST TERRITORY

Since 1947 the Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands has been administered by the United States under a trusteeship agreement with the United Nations. A High Commissioner, appointed by the President and responsible to the Secretary of the Interior, administers the Trust Territory which is composed generally of the Marshall, Caroline and Mariana Island chains and is situated west of Hawaii and east of the Philippines. The Congress of Micronesia, consisting solely of Micronesians, is the elected legislative body of the Trust Territory.

The United States is obligated under the terms of the trusteeship agreement to promote political advancement, as well as the development of the local inhabitants 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." There is, however, no termination date for the trusteeship agreement.

In October 1969, the first of a series of meetings between representatives of the Executive Branch of the United States and a delegation of members of the Congress of Micronesia was held to discuss the future political status of the Trust Territory. The United States delegation was composed of representatives of the Departments of Interior, State and Defense and was headed by Interior's Assistant Secretary for Public Land Management.

A second meeting was held in May 1970, at which time a commonwealth proposal was offered by the United States representatives to the Micronesian delegation. In its July 1970 session, the Congress of Micronesia chose not to accept the commonwealth proposal but did make provision for future discussions.

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In March 1971 President Nixon appointed Dr. Franklin Haydn Williams as his Personal Representative, with rank of Ambassador, to conduct negotiations on the future political status of the Trust Territory. In October 1971 and April 1972, Ambassador Williams, with representatives from Interior, State and Defense Departments, met for discussions in, respectively, Hawaii and Palau, with the Joint Committee on Future Status of the Congress of Micronesia.

The meetings resulted in a number of preliminary agreements based upon new U.S. proposals. In particular, the association would be governed by a compact, establishing a mutually beneficial relationship of Free Association over internal affairs while authority over and responsibility for foreign affairs will be vested in the U.S. Thus, Micronesians would establish and control their own internal government structure, determine economic development priorities and control Micronesian lands excepting those on which the U.S. had prenegotiated lease or option to lease agreements. Foreign affairs and defense would remain a U.S. responsibility, with full consultation on matters of local interest.

It was also agreed in principle that the Compact could be unilaterally terminable by either party after having been in effect for a period of years, the precise length of which has not yet been determined. Both sides agreed that new military leases and options to lease will continue for the length of their designated term and that a mutual security pact providing for continuing U.S. defense interests will be negotiated in advance of the signing of the Compact to go into effect in the event of termination. Finally, the agreements reached are understood by both parties to be preliminary pending final agreement on the Compact as a whole.

There remains need for further discussion and agreement. Subjects include the matters of Finance and Transition, and several issues left over from the talks at Hana, Maui, last year. It is anticipated that these will be discussed at the time of the drafting of the precise language of the Compact.

Meetings are now scheduled for mid-July in Washington, D. C., at which time primary emphasis will be given to drafting agreed Compact language in those areas in which preliminary agreement has been reached.

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