



United States Department of the Interior

OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20240

27 October 1972

Dear Mr. President:

The Micronesian Future Political Status Talks, held at Barbers Point, Hawaii from September 28 to October 6 ended with both sides agreeing to a temporary recess. Uncertainties stemming from (1) the failure of the Congress of Micronesia to endorse the agreements that had been reached in Washington in July, and (2) new instructions to the Micronesian delegation to negotiate for an independence alternative while continuing to work toward a Compact of Free Association led me to the conclusion that it would be unwise to proceed with the negotiations until the U.S. had had time to reassess its positions in light of the new developments.

The political state of affairs in the TTPI is one of confusion and division. Differences exist within Districts and between Districts over the future political status question. The Congress is divided as is the Micronesian delegation and as yet there is no clear way to determine the true attitudes of the people.

It seems safe to say that the majority of the Congress and the Micronesian delegation continues to favor a form of future political association with the U.S. with some advocating a closer and more enduring relationship than others. The pro-independence faction is a small minority, but includes some of the strongest members of the Congress and the most vigorous, vocal and politically active elements outside of the Congress. This group successfully waged a campaign during the recent special session of the Congress of Micronesia to undermine support for the partial draft Compact of Free Association which had been agreed to in Washington this summer. The attack was focused primarily on the provisions providing for full U.S. authority over foreign affairs and defense and the agreed annex which satisfied minimum U.S. military land requirements. Ironically, the principal sponsors of the unexpected independence resolution were members of the Micronesian delegation which had unanimously agreed in July to the language of the draft Compact containing the provisions covering foreign affairs, defense and U.S. land rights.

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The U.S. opened the Barbers Point Talks with a series of questions and our unwillingness to proceed before receiving answers forced the Micronesians into long deliberations among themselves. It became clear that there was disunity within their own ranks and that our questions had caught them by surprise.

When they finally responded it was obvious that there had been a basic change in their approach. Previously the Micronesian Joint Future Status Committee had had one single negotiating objective; now they had two. In their response they said that "the only acceptable type of plebiscite must include a choice of more than one political alternative", and that, "at some point in the future we must negotiate for independence so that this alternative might be available to the people of Micronesia".

While holding to the position that the Trusteeship Agreement clearly provides for an independence alternative, the Micronesian delegation went on to state that Free Association with the U.S. continued to be its primary objective. Nevertheless, the Joint Future Status Committee asked whether the U.S. had a new position on independence and by implication whether or not the U.S. was willing to offer the people of Micronesia this alternative option.

Given the uncertainties, the divisions within the Micronesian delegation, and the new independence factor which had been surfaced, I decided that it would be unwise to continue with the drafting of a Compact of Free Association in advance of a deliberate reassessment of the whole situation including what the U.S. response would be to the new mandate under which the Joint Future Status Committee was operating. In particular I did not wish to unfold the American position on the important remaining titles of the Compact including the financial and termination provisions since it was conceivable that they would be modified by subsequent decision on the independence question.

During the course of the Barbers Point Talks I had a number of private conversations with the Chairman of the Micronesian Delegation. He was much more forthcoming than he had been on previous occasions in sharing with me some of his internal problems. He readily acknowledged that he was confused and disappointed by the last session of his Congress which produced the independence resolution and he agreed that a pause in the talks might be beneficial to both sides. He further confided that he was distressed by the strength and the effectiveness of the anti-American, anti-military, and anti-Free Association campaign being waged by the pro-independence elements, particularly by some of his Congressional colleagues and by young Micronesian political activists and their American supporters inside and outside of Micronesia.

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He argued that the best counter to this influence would be the early completion of a draft Compact, one that would be acceptable to the majority of his delegation and to the Congress of Micronesia. According to him, the independence movement does not have at the present time broad popular support. He said further that a majority of the Joint Future Status Committee had finally realized that they had to stand together against those, even within their own Committee, who wanted to abort or at least delay the negotiations for Free Association. To counter this effort he urged that the talks be resumed as soon as possible and strongly suggested that it would be in our interest to hold them prior to the January session of the Congress of Micronesia. He repeated this plea in his final plenary statement.

In preparation for a resumption of the talks, the Office of Micronesian Status Negotiations is now in the process of reviewing and reassessing the situation and the U.S. position in light of recent developments. My recommendations will be forwarded to the Under Secretaries Committee for its consideration and action prior to their submission to you for final decision.

Before closing I would like to report to you on the status of the separate talks with the Marianas leading to that District's permanent union with the U.S. While leadership of the Marianas continues to plan for a separate status, certain elements in Micronesia including members of the Congress have challenged the right of the Marianas to enter into separate talks so long as Micronesia is administered as a single political entity. The question has been raised whether the pertinent Secretarial Order authorizing to Congress of Micronesia to legislate for all six districts should be amended to provide for the separate administration of the Marianas, in order to simplify the process of direct negotiations with that District. This matter is being given priority attention by the Department of the Interior. In the meantime it has been tentatively agreed that the first meeting with the Marianas Future Political Status Commission would be held in December in Saipan.

Attached are copies of the Barbers Point final Joint Communique and the transcript of the Sixth Round of Negotiations, as well as a summary evaluation cable.

Very respectfully yours,

Franklin Hayden Williams

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