



DEPARTMENT OF STATE

Washington, D.C. 20520

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March 30, 1973

Position Paper

Requirement for and Character of a Micronesian  
Independence Option

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Requirement for and Character of a Micronesian  
Independence Option

Summary and Recommendation -- The Department of State, in proposing an independence option for Micronesia, does not favor independence as a status for Micronesia. To the contrary, State believes that the present free association course best serves both Micronesian and U.S. interests.

[REDACTED]

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There are essentially three different but closely related reasons for an independence option: our legal obligations, our moral obligations, and political/tactical considerations. These are discussed below.

Legal Considerations -- The legal considerations are straightforward. The spirit and the letter of the UN Charter

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and of the Trusteeship Agreement require that the Micronesians have an opportunity to choose "self-government or independence." For the U.S. to be able credibly to assert that it has fulfilled its obligations as administering authority, it must arrange for a full and legitimate act of self-determination which, by definition, requires an independence option. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

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[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

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Moral Obligations -- We must not ignore the potential costs of denying to Micronesians their right to reject or accept that which we insist upon for ourselves--and for others. The principle of self-determination has been a central tenet of our foreign policy throughout the 20th century--including today in Vietnam. Refusal by the U.S. Government to grant meaningful self-determination, particularly to a people for whom we are legally and morally responsible, would reflect poorly on our credibility and image elsewhere.

We should not be sanguine that what appears to be an isolated and remote issue today will be so tomorrow.

Political and Tactical Considerations -- These alone forcefully argue for an independence option. They are listed below.

(1) It is quite clear that only a relatively small, but very articulate and influential minority of Micronesians at this time favors independence. An overwhelming majority of Micronesians either favors association with the United States, or is presently reluctant to choose between association and independence in the absence of more information on the implications of each form of status. Some prefer the status quo pending the further development of Micronesia. Nevertheless, the independence movement in Micronesia has grown from non-existence to a significant and serious movement during the past five years. That movement is likely to continue to expand over the next several years, and in time, in the absence of persuasive counter-vailing arguments on the viability of independence, could become widespread.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

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[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

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[REDACTED]

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(2) As a practical matter, the U.S. Government has already agreed to an independence option for Micronesia-- through its agreement that any free association arrangement may be unilaterally terminated by either party after 15 years (the Micronesian position is that such a moratorium should be limited to 5 years). The issue thus is not whether the Micronesians have a right to opt for independence, but whether they should be given that opportunity in the near future or sometime in the 1980's. The time span involved is insignificant in terms of our long-term interests in the area, but highly significant in terms of our obligations and, our ability to conclude and implement a satisfactory status settlement.



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(3) It is sometimes argued that surfacing of an independence option could further encourage independence sentiment. This argument ignores the fact that almost all Micronesians, while being aware of the U.S. preference for association, assume as a matter of course that they will be offered an independence option in any act of self-determination. Thus the present majority sentiment against independence flows not from an assumption that there is no alternative, but rather from a choice between assumed options of association and independence. /

between the present situation and the offering of an independence option is that, properly handled, the present erosion of sentiment in favor of association can be reversed in our favor. In point of fact, it is State's view that the risks of offering independence now are far less than those that flow from withholding such an option. The latter course would result in independence pressures which could become irresistible--or at the least make any relationship with Micronesia of little practical value.

(4) The Micronesian Status Delegation is formally charged by the Congress of Micronesia with negotiating not only a free association compact, but also an independence option. It is probable that the Congress will refuse to take formal action on any free association option until such time as it can measure that status against an independence option. Any refusal by the U.S. Government to provide an independence option could easily result in a situation in which the Congress either (a) refuses to endorse the free association compact; or (b) defines its own independence option which undoubtedly would be less helpful to us than any of our own choosing. This paper addresses elsewhere the problems we would have in Micronesia, probably in the U.S. Congress, and definitely within the UN in attempting to implement free association or any other form of status without the cooperation of the Congress of Micronesia, as well as the approval of the Micronesian people.

(5) Refusal to provide an independence option almost certainly would result in the Congress of Micronesia refusing to endorse a free association relationship, and to participate in sponsorship of an act of self-determination. Without the cooperation of the Congress of Micronesia and of district level leadership closely allied to the Congress, the U.S. Government would have no choice but to sponsor a "yes-no" plebiscite in circumstances that would at best result in a low affirmative vote and a low turnout. Given the attitudes of the Congress of Micronesia, it is quite possible that the Congress would attempt to thwart the plebiscite through one or a combination of the following actions. (a) The Congress could call for a boycott of the plebiscite while appealing its case to the UN. (b) Alternatively, the Congress could call for a "no" vote--probably with a high degree of success, or even for a write-in independence vote with lesser prospects for success. (c) Combined with any of the above tactics, the Congress could unilaterally declare for independence by resolution. In any discussion of the possibility of an unilaterally sponsored "yes-no" plebiscite, it must be remembered that the environment will operate against us. Language, cultural and other communication barriers will be on the side of the Micronesian leadership, and we have no means of effectively mounting those barriers.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED] There would

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be few restraints on that leadership in its interpretation of the options, whereas we would have to remain within the truth while often presenting abstract concepts of little or no meaning to many Micronesians.

(6) [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

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[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

(7) Many of those in Micronesia presently favoring independence do so on the assumption that U.S. strategic interests and defense requirements in Micronesia are such that an independent Micronesia will have sufficient levers on the U.S. to assure financial subsidies sufficient to support independence. In the absence of a U.S. defined independence option which contradicts that position, the above point of view is persuasive and is gaining adherents. This is especially true within the Congress of Micronesia.



(8) For much the same reason, many key leaders and ordinary Micronesians have thus far been reluctant to endorse association with the United States, even though they may be presently inclined against independence. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

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(9) Independence in Micronesia is now a vague and remote concept. Its advocacy has been culturally and politically attractive as a means of postponing hard decisions and avoiding painful commitment to association, some of the terms of which are inevitably distasteful. [REDACTED]

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(10) Whatever their individual positions on Micronesia's future political status, Micronesia's leaders agree that Micronesia is entitled to a choice between association and independence. That position is taken as a matter of principle and pride. Pride requires that they have the opportunity to consider and reject, of their own free will, independence. The principle involved is so important that any U.S. refusal to permit that rejection would without doubt cost us the support of many key leaders, especially in the Congress of

Micronesia. Many of these leaders are quite capable of moving from support of association to advocacy of independence in defense of that principle, and in defiance of any U.S. denial of their perceived rights. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

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(11) Our strategic and other interests in Micronesia will be served and protected only in an amicable relationship with tolerant attitudes toward the U.S. on the part of Micronesia's leaders. Any future association can survive only with good will on both sides, particularly given the number of friction points which will inevitably be part of a free association relationship. We must bear in mind that the key leaders in any future Micronesian Government are today among those espousing either independence per se, or the principle that Micronesians must be able to choose freely between association and independence. Without an independence option, the strains on our future relationship from the outset would assure that relationship would be not only unstable but probably also short-lived. Most certainly the Micronesian Government leadership would be disinclined to be cooperative in areas of importance to us.

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(13) Most of the arguments cited above for an independence option relate to the positive effects and requirements of such an offer, while alluding to the risks of no independence option. The greatest risk attached to the latter course is simply that such action could render an association arrangement either unattainable or (if attained) unworkable. It is sometimes argued that, in these circumstances, U.S. interests can still be protected through continuing maintenance of the trusteeship agreement, perhaps with much increased internal self-government. However, that course would not (in the face of a hostile leadership) improve, in practical terms, our ability to obtain and exercise the Palau options, nor would it change the situation with respect to Kwajalein-- which we can retain under any form of status. It would

admittedly assure protection of our "denial" requirement. But Kwajalein and denial can be obtained under any form of status (including independence), while an effort to maintain the status quo in a hostile environment would do no more than postpone termination of the trusteeship under circumstances which would almost certainly result in significantly increased pressures for independence.

(14) It is also argued that time and our development programs in Micronesia will ultimately result in increased sentiment for association. This appears extremely unlikely. The emergence and expansion of an independence movement in Micronesia has in fact paralleled our increased developmental efforts of the past few years. It is difficult to see how the U.S. could accomplish in a few more years what it has not been able to accomplish in the 29 years that we have been in Micronesia to date. To the contrary, there is every reason to believe that any effort to impose a status quo situation could in fact result in decreased U.S. control of Micronesia through low-level but effective violence in the districts. This would fit the cultural patterns of several districts, and the attitudes of an increasing number of U.S. educated Micronesians familiar with the potential for violent harassment of any American presence, especially in Palau and Truk.

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5) Following the act of self-determination, we should immediately begin the transition to termination of the trusteeship, with a view to earliest possible implementation of the new status. The Micronesians must be made to focus on their internal problems, and to shift their attention from the character of their relationships with the U.S.

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There are essentially three different but closely related reasons for an independence option: our legal obligations, our moral obligations, and political/tactical considerations. These are discussed below.

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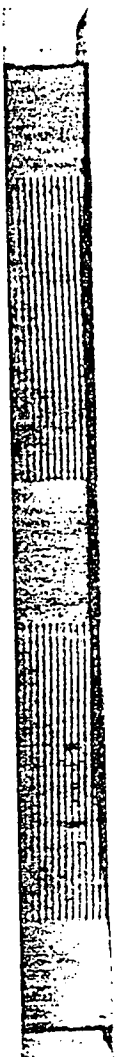
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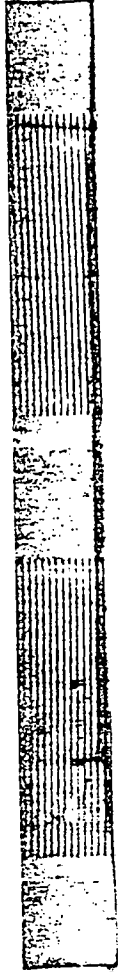
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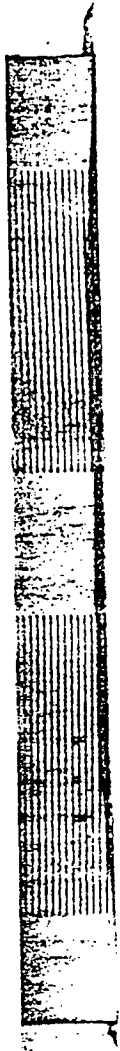


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