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September 26, 1973

Mr. Edward DLG Pangelinan  
Chairman  
Marianas Political Status Commission  
P.O. Box 825  
Saipan, Mariana Islands 96950

Dear Ed:

I sent you a cable today regarding the call which I received from Jim Wilson suggesting that our negotiations begin on November 5. The primary reason for this suggested change is apparently the desire of the U.S. Delegation to have a session of formal negotiations with the Joint Committee after our negotiations and, at the same time, avoid running into the Christmas holidays. As I indicated in my cable, I recommend agreeing to moving the negotiations up to November 12, but am somewhat reluctant to extend them up to November 5. I do not feel strongly on this matter, however, and will defer to whatever decision you and your colleagues in Saipan make on this scheduling matter.

During the course of this conversation I had some opportunity to explore with Mr. Wilson what the parties might hope to accomplish at the next session. Without being too negative, I expressed my concern that the slow pace of work at the committee level and other recent developments might prevent any significant progress at the next session. The following points came up in the conversation:

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- (1) On the subject of public lands, for example, I said that we had hoped that the U.S. Delegation would be prepared by the time of the next session with the Marianas to make some tentative agreements regarding the timing and procedures whereby the public lands might be returned to the Marianas. I reminded Mr. Wilson of his statement during the meeting with Jim White and myself several weeks ago to the effect that the U.S. Delegation hoped to firm up its policy position on this matter by the end of September and be prepared to discuss with us at that time how the question of public lands should be handled. Mr. Wilson stated that he still wanted to keep this timetable but that the U.S. Delegation also was committed to try and settle the issue of public lands on a territory-wide basis. Since this would require continued discussions with the Joint Committee and because the negotiations with the Joint Committee have now been put off again, Mr. Wilson was more or less suggesting that not too much on this topic could be resolved at the Marianas session. I told him that we had hoped to make some progress regarding the use of a public corporation in this connection and he was non-committal. He did say, however, that he believed the ultimate resolution of this matter would be acceptable to the people of the Marianas.
- (2) With regard to the Working Group on Economics, I told him of the recent conversation between Messrs. Leonard and Silver and the scheduling of the next meeting for October 5. I said that this did not provide much time for working together on the Marianas proposal for Phase I planning and that we had hoped that specific areas of agreement and disagreement would be identified for discussion between the two delegations at the next session of negotiations. He said that Mr. Silver was getting his thoughts together on this subject and that much work would have to be done in this committee during the next month.

- (3) On the subject of the U.S. military proposals, I reminded him of my desire to confer with him and the Department of Defense representatives before the next session of negotiations. I said that I expected the Commission to stick with the positions expressed in its last position paper on this subject and that, if the United States did likewise, we would be unable to make any progress on this subject. His response was silence.
  
- (4) I suggested to Mr. Wilson that some further thought should be given by both parties regarding the agenda items for the next session and what, realistically, might be accomplished. When I put the question squarely to him, Mr. Wilson said that he hoped the parties could reach general agreement at the next session and begin drafting a formal document. I expressed my personal view that this was most unlikely unless the U.S. Delegation was prepared to make major concessions. I suggested that the Commission certainly was going to be unwilling to sign off with respect to the U.S. military proposals unless it had firm and specific commitments in the areas of political status and financial support. Mr. Wilson, again, was very non-committal and said that he did accept the fact that all these subjects would have to be tied together in a single agreement.

I believe that the next session of negotiations should be approached with considerable caution. I expect considerable pressure placed upon the Commission by the United States to agree with U.S. proposals not very much different from those put forward at the last meeting. Unless the United States surprises me by making major concessions, I do not believe that it will be in the Commission's interest to even agree in principle with many of the U.S. positions. I believe that the parties are still a long way apart on important issues in the area of political status, financial support, U.S. military proposals, return of public lands and, perhaps, transition. If I am correct in these assessments, then we should concentrate on identifying very limited and specific topics which can be productively discussed at the next session of negotiations so that both parties can feel that some progress is being made. If this approach is followed,

we may be able to avoid the kind of deadlock and the accompanying recriminations which are likely to follow. We will continue working here in an effort to identify the areas or problems which we believe can most usefully be placed on the agenda for the next session.

Best personal regards,

Sincerely,

Howard P. Willens

cc: Mr. Leonard  
Mr. White

bc: Messrs. Lapin  
Carter  
Helfer