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June 4, 1974

*(Duplicate sent to Mr. Oberdorfer
on June 14 at Jefferson Hotel, etc)*

~~Mr. Don Oberdorfer~~
Washington Post
Asahi Building - 9th Floor
6 - 7 Ginza 6 Chome, Cho-Ku
Tokyo, Japan.

Dear Don:

In case you haven't seen this or the relevant story in the Pacific Daily News, enclosed is a copy of the joint communique issued last Friday, May 31, 1974. I was on the verge of calling you in advance of its release in order to encourage you to come to Saipan or otherwise cover the story, assuming you think it is newsworthy.

Although it may not appear so on the face of it, the tentative agreements reflected in this joint communique basically ensure that our negotiations will result in a formal status agreement bringing the Marianas into the United States as a commonwealth. As you can imagine, our tentative commitment to make the necessary lands available for military purposes was a prerequisite to any such new status. At the same time, the United States agreement to provide us with a political status and economic support commensurate with our needs and desires was also very important.

The most important outstanding issues relate to the method of acquiring the land with the Marianas holding out for a lease rather than a purchase, and reaching a compromise between two draft Status Agreements, one prepared by the U.S. Delegation and one submitted on behalf of the Marianas Political Status Commission.

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I would really appreciate your informed judgment regarding what coverage, if any, would serve my ultimate goal of encouraging enlightened and fair consideration of the proposed new status for the Marianas on its merits. Based upon my work over the past 18 months, I expect that the new status will be challenged by those with an anti-military bias and those who believe that the United States acquiescence in separate negotiations with the Marianas has made it impossible for Micronesia as a whole to survive as a viable political and economic entity. In addition, I also expect some vigorous complaints from Guam and the other territories who feel that the Marianas are in the process of negotiating a preferred status with the United States. There is going to be a very critical study produced by the Carnegie Endowment on Micronesia sometime later this year which will take a very dim view of the Marianas status negotiations and I am concerned about its impact among influential members of Congress. Do you have any thoughts?

Best personal regards to you and Laura,

Sincerely,

Howard P. Willens

Enclosure

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