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Memorandum of Conversation

Saipan, Mariana Islands

DATE: Nov. 18, 1974
4:00 p.m.

SUBJECT: Marianas V

PARTICIPANTS: Vicente N. (Ben) Santos, President
Marianas District Legislature
Vice-Chairman, Marianas Political
Status Commission

Alf E. Bergesen, Status LNO

PLACE: President Santos' Office

I was unable to contact Ben Santos over the weekend to carry out instructions received November 16 as he was off island. After talking to Dr. Francisco Palacios, Chairman of the Territorial Party, and Pedro A. Tenorio, who defeated MPSC Chairman Eddie Pangelinan in the Marianas senatorial race, I met with Ben. (Pangelinan was still away, in Manila, so I was unable to see him.) I covered the following points on instructions.

1. His message to Ambassador Williams (Status LNO 328 Nov. 14) was appreciated.
2. U.S. remained willing to meet in week of December 2 but was not pressing if Santos believed the local political situation would create any real difficulties. The Ambassador nonetheless believed that real progress could be made if we got down to it.
3. While it had been hoped that this December meeting could be a final, signing session, we recognized that local conditions could make it take a little longer.
4. The MDL might still wish to take action on a new public lands bill before final signature of the new status agreement.
5. The decision on timing was one for the Marianas leadership to determine.
6. The agenda for a December meeting could contain the following:
 - a. Agreement on land, particularly price and method of acquisition;
 - b. Completion of draft agreement, where a number of substantive issues remain to be resolved;

(Drafting Office and Officer)

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- c. Agreement on timing and modalities of separate administration;
- d. Agreement on transition items: establishment of a joint commission and secretariat, political education, and further exchanges regarding the impact of moving the capital;
- e. Detailed discussions of future timetable for approval process, content of the plebiscite and its timing, and the constitutional convention and referendum.

7. Santos was informed that Palacios had been in touch with Williams; we assumed Santos would take whatever action was appropriate regarding Palacios' concerns. (Ben raised his eyebrows at this, but did not demur.)

8. Since the planned November 18 meeting was clearly overtaken by events it would be appropriate to have a preliminary informal meeting of the principals, including whatever grouping the MPSC desired on its side, prior to formal meeting, primarily to discuss the agenda further. Washington suggested Guam, December 1 or 2, or Saipan if preferred.

Santos commented on the question of future status-related activity of the District Legislature. He said that he did not expect the Legislature to deal with such issues as the establishment of a legal entity to take title to public lands until its next regular session beginning in February 1975. He noted that his legislators had been unhappy about two aspects the land question, the non-return of military retention lands and the non-return of lands designated for public improvement.

He noted that MDL member Felipe Salas had resigned from the MPSC (he has been appointed a judge); he promised to appoint a "good man" as his replacement.

He said that he (and the Popular Party members of the MPSC) were still anxious to sign the new status agreement, in December if possible. He noted that the mandate of the MPSC from the District Legislature was to negotiate new status; although he indicated they could live with slippage of up to three months, if the MPSC didn't get on with it the MDL would make them move (e.g. by reorganization).

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