

JOINT TRANSITION SECRETARIAT

Background

One of the prerequisites to the organization of a Government of the Northern Marianas, under the U.N. Trusteeship, is the establishment of the Joint Commission on Transition and its Secretariat.

It is assumed that the MPSC is as anxious as we are to move forward in this area and will therefore wish to discuss prospects and problems during next month's session.

Critical to this is the availability and selection of qualified personnel for the Secretariat, which in turn depends upon favorable action on our request from the U.S. Congress for \$1.5 million to support it and its agreed activities.

Timing

As noted above, the recruiting of professionals for the Secretariat cannot be consummated until additional monies for this purpose are made available in the FY 1975 appropriation. However, we can attempt to line up the requisite talent before the funds are voted, on the understanding that no final commitment can be made until the Congress acts. Also, we can move ahead with the organization of the Transition Commission as soon as the agreement is initialed; however, it cannot really begin to function seriously until the Secretariat is operational.

Between December 20 and the date additional funds are made available and the agreement is initialed the following steps are proposed:

1. That the MPSC conduct a survey of available talent for their slots on the Secretariat--the Director, Physical planner and Liaison Officer; and

2. That the U.S. (OMSN) supported by (Interior) ascertain the availability of qualified U.S. candidates for the three U.S. slots--Deputy, Political Scientist expert in the field of public administration and Development Economist--we could do this by advertising through the normal ec channels or more informally by placing notices in professional publications and contacting appropriate Washington personnel officers, e.g., the Placement Service of the Department of State and AID. The latter, coupled with a discreet search of CCC files, e.g., the Executive Inventory is recommended.

3. The next step would be to screen the written applications and conduct a series of interviews of leading prospects here and on the west coast--narrow the list to a score of those who appear to be best qualified and most likely to work harmoniously and effectively in the Marianas political environment.

4. Informal agreements regarding salary, timing, etc., could then be made with the three selected. Formal commitments can be made as soon as the U.S. Congress votes the necessary funds and the status agreement is approved by the MDL.

5. That the TT Headquarters (HICOM) and DOTA complete all necessary staff work for the establishment of a separate administration for the Northern Marianas and initiate preliminary analyses of the local impact of relocating the capital, the latter in cooperation with local officials designated by the MPSC. Note:

Headquarters staff has already recommended the establishment of a TT Headquarters Task Force headed by Pete Coleman to grapple with this problem.

5. If all goes well, the Secretariat should be staffed and in place by no later than April 1, 1975.

An organizational meeting of the Joint Commission could be scheduled for March 1975; hopefully this meeting would produce some general policy guidelines for the Secretariat. These could be worked out by the leaders of the two delegations in advance.

Detailed Budget

A more detailed budget for FY 75 & 76 needs to be worked out with DOTA, based on consultation with key staff from the Headquarters, e.g., Pete Coleman, ^{+ the MPSC} One of the major factors here is the cost of housing and dependent education for the expatriate staff and refined cost estimates of the several special activities referred to in the Ad-hoc report, e.g., holding of a District CON CON, a plebiscite, ESG program, etc. However, a final budget for the first year of the Secretariat cannot be drafted until the Joint Commission approves the research or study program submitted by the Secretariat, e.g., the contract costs of preliminary studies for the long-range program of economic development and the socio-economic impact of moving the capital to another district, etc.

Logistics

We should initiate informal discussions with Headquarters, through DOTA, on the best way to meet the major anticipated logistics needs of the Secretariat and the contract employees.

Adequate office space, secretaries, a library, etc., should be reserved prior to the arrival of the last U.S. member of the Secretariat.

Funding

While we may be able to find funds for an initial meeting of the Commission, recruiting expenses and some preliminary ESG work not much more can be done in this area until the Congress votes the \$1.5 million. This in turn depends upon action by the authorization committees, who seem to be treating this as a matter better postponed to the new session.