



United States Department of the Interior

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OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20240

FACT SHEET

Date: February 15, 1974

Reference: 21/g/OS

(REVISED)

Subject:

FUTURE POLITICAL STATUS
OF THE TRUST TERRITORY

The Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands, commonly called Micronesia, is situated along the equator southwest of Hawaii and east of the Philippines. The approximately 110,000 people of Micronesia live on 97 of the 2,141 islands which comprise the Mariana, Caroline and Marshalls chains. A Presidentially appointed High Commissioner, responsible to the Secretary of the Interior, administers the area and executes approved legislation of the Congress of Micronesia which is the highest elected lawmaking body of the Trust Territory and is made up solely of Micronesians.

Under the terms of the 1947 Trusteeship Agreement with the United Nations Security Council, the United States is obligated to develop the Micronesians toward "self-government or independence as may be appropriate to the particular circumstances of the Trust Territory and its peoples and the freely expressed wishes of the peoples concerned." There is no fixed date for the termination of the Trusteeship Agreement.

In October 1969 a delegation from the Congress of Micronesia met with a U.S. delegation, consisting of representatives from the Departments of Interior, State and Defense to discuss the future political status of the Trust Territory. At a second meeting in May 1970, the U.S. presented a commonwealth proposal which the Congress of Micronesia chose not to accept. The Congress, at the same time, requested that the talks continue.

In March 1971 Dr. F. Haydn Williams was appointed as the President's Personal Representative for Microneisan Status Negotiations; he led the U.S. delegation in formal negotiations with the Joint Committee on Future Status of the Congress of Micronesia in October 1971 and again in April 1972.

The meetings produced a preliminary agreement on the nature of the new political status which would be called free association with the United States. This association, governed by a Compact, would give the Micronesians complete control over their own internal affairs. At the same time, full responsibility for defense and foreign affairs would be vested in the United States which would consult with the new Government of Micronesia on international matters of local concern. It was also

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agreed that the Compact could be unilaterally terminated by either party after it has been in force for a certain period of time (still to be negotiated). Both sides agreed that new military leases and options to lease will survive for the length of their designated term.

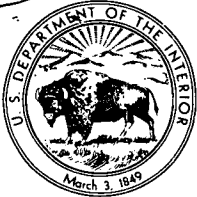
Since April 1972, there have been three rounds of negotiations between the American and Micronesian political status delegations. The fifth round in Washington, D.C., in July 1972 marked the beginning of the actual drafting of the Compact in the areas of internal affairs, foreign affairs and defense responsibility. This was followed by a round in Hawaii in October of 1972 centering on procedural aspects of the negotiations. The most recent round, held in November 1973 in Washington, D.C., primarily involved U.S. financial assistance to the Government of Micronesia upon termination of the Trusteeship. While no joint drafting was accomplished, the U.S. submitted to the Joint Committee the remainder of its draft sections of the Compact of Free Association. Informal consultations between the two delegations on the subject of finance are now in progress. Formal negotiations are expected to resume in the spring of 1974.

In response to a longstanding request by the people of the Marianas District for a close and permanent association with the U.S., separate from the rest of Micronesia, the U.S. delegation, headed by Ambassador Williams, began negotiations in December 1972 with the Marianas Political Status Commission. During the second session in May 1973, preliminary agreement was reached by the two delegations on a commonwealth status as a goal for the Marianas District.

In December 1973 the third Marianas negotiating session took place on Saipan. Tentative agreement was reached in the areas of local self-government, taxation and tariffs. Joint working groups from both delegations are currently holding follow-up discussions on the subjects of transition to commonwealth, future U.S. financial assistance and applicability of U.S. laws. The joint communiqué, issued at the close of the third session stated that "both delegations agree that this session has resulted in substantial progress toward the mutual goal of a secure and enduring place in the American political family for the people of the Marianas." The formal negotiations with the Northern Marianas are also expected to resume in the spring of 1974.

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03-022519

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