

A PROPOSAL FOR POLITICAL STATUS TRANSITION ORGANIZATION
AND PHASE I IMPLEMENTATION

Transition Commissions

To facilitate the transition to a new political status, it is proposed that two transition commissions be established. A U.S./Mariana Islands Joint Commission for Transition would be responsible for the planning and implementation of Phase I joint activities, and a Northern Mariana Islands Commission for Transition would be responsible for the planning and implementation of Phase I activities relating to internal political matters which are not of concern to the United States. It is anticipated that a period of a least two years will be required for the completion of the work of the two commissions. In the interest of economy, and because of the interdependence of studies and other staff work to be performed for the two commissions, it is proposed that a single full time Secretariat be established to serve both commissions.

U.S./Mariana Islands Joint Commission

It is proposed that the U.S. Mariana Islands Joint Commission for Transition should have 9 members, 4 members (including representatives of the Trust Territory Government) appointed by the U.S. Delegation and 5 members appointed by the Mariana Islands District Legislature. The Commission should have two Co-Chairmen, one to be designated by the U.S. Delegation and one to be designated by the Marianas Legislature. The Joint Commission should meet on call of either Co-Chairman. Commission members should be compensated for expenses and for time spent on Commission business, except that public employees should not be compensated for both public employment and Commission activities when they are engaged with Joint Commission business.

The functions of the Joint Commission should be:

1. To provide an institutionalized channel for continuous consultation and liaison between the Northern Mariana Islands and the U.S. Government on matters related to status transition
2. To oversee all joint transition implementation actions flowing from the new status agreement, including political education and the status agreement plebiscite.
3. To establish general policies and guidelines for necessary research and planning to be carried out during Phase I on matters of joint concern.

4. To review all Joint Commission studies and reports prepared by the Secretariat, forwarding them to end-users with or without recommendations as appropriate.

Northern Mariana Islands Commission

It is proposed that when the 5 Marianas representatives on the U.S./Mariana Islands Joint Commission sit alone, they shall constitute the Northern Mariana Islands Commission for Transition. The Mariana Islands Co-Chairman for the Joint Commission should serve as Chairman of the Mariana Islands Commission. Commission members should be compensated for expenses and time spent on Commission business, except that public employees should not be compensated for both public employment and Commission activities when they are engaged with Mariana Islands Commission business.

The functions of the Mariana Islands Commission should be:

1. To prepare for, and to conduct all necessary studies and work to support the District Legislature in convening and conducting a constitutional convention and referendum.
2. To prepare for, and to conduct all necessary studies and work associated with implementing a new constitution prior to the reorganization of government and the establishment of implementing institutions.

The Secretariat

It is proposed that a full time professional Secretariat be established to provide staff support to both the Joint Commission and the Mariana Islands Commission. The Secretariat should be headquartered in the Northern Mariana Islands and should have 6 authorized professional positions: a director; a deputy director/budget officer; a liaison officer; a public administration specialist; a physical planner; and an economist. Given the broad responsibilities of the Secretariat, and the scope of the work it must undertake, it is judged that internal technical capability is essential. Legal and audit services would be provided by external legal counsel and auditors.

The director and deputy director/budget officer should be recruited and appointed by the Joint Commission. The director should be recruited from the Northern Mariana Islands and the deputy director/budget officer should be an American. All other professionals in the Secretariat should be recruited and appointed by the director, subject to Joint Commission approval.

The functions of the Secretariat should be:

1. To be responsible to the Joint Commission for planning, implementation and coordination of all Phase I programs and activities falling under the Joint Commission's responsibility.
2. To be responsible to the Northern Mariana Islands Commission for planning, implementation and coordination of all Phase I programs and activities falling under the Mariana Islands Commission's responsibility.
3. To utilize in carrying out its responsibilities, to the extent available, the expert advice and services of advisors from the United States Government, the Trust Territory Government and the District Administration.
4. To administer all Phase I funds, and to provide quarterly progress reports to the Joint Commission on Phase I joint activities and to the Mariana Islands Commission on Phase I activities of concern only to the Mariana Islands Commission.

The programs of the Secretariat should include but not necessarily be limited to:

1. Programs for the Joint Commission:
 - a. Programs for Political Education and Status Agreement Plebiscite.
 - b. Economic and Social Infrastructure Planning (Including Fiscal and Revenue Planning).
 - c. Physical Infrastructure Planning.
 - d. Analysis of Trust Territory Government Relocation Impacts.
2. Programs for the Mariana Islands Commission:
 - a. Studies and Programs for Constitutional Convention and Referendum.
 - b. Studies and Programs for Constitution Implementation and Government Reorganization.
 - c. Studies and Programs to Identify and Prepare High Priority Legislative Proposals not Related to Implementation of Constitution and Reorganization of Government.