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"FIVE VERSUS SIX"

Major Positions on Micronesian Unity

To date, Micronesian unity under a future constitution has centered on the Marianas participation in the Constitutional Convention and in the JCFS negotiations. This issue has become whether free association will include five or six districts (exclude or include the Mariana Islands).

The Marianas Political Status Commission was initially opposed to inclusion in the Micronesian Constitutional Convention, but acquiesced on legal grounds. It now appears the MPSC has opted to give support to the aspirations of the JCFS and to Micronesian-wide concerns in exchange for minimum interference by the COM in the commonwealth talks and in local political aspirations. Remaining in the COM and JCFS talks enables the MPSC to (1) exert some influence over issues affecting the Marianas; (2) to retain a full scope of options for the future; and (3) to retain bargaining leverage against the USG by threatening to rejoin the JCFS talks. The MPSC would now fully endorse separatism; the Chairman and Vice Chairman of the MPSC have suggested that, if requested, the Marianas District Legislature would formally request the USG to establish a separate administration for the Marianas so as to more fully protect the commonwealth talks from COM interference.

The Marianas District Legislature is adamantly opposed to COM interference in local district affairs. It resents COM legislative control over tax revenues derived in the district and over Marianas public lands. There are numerous hostile resolutions from the MDL to the COM against unfavorable COM actions and interjection into local affairs. The MDL would support action for a separate administration.

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The Marianas District Administration also opposed COM impediments to local aspirations, but is apparently more concerned over future job security. If the district is separated and local control over the Marianas government is established, some key officials would no doubt be removed. At present, most district employees are insulated from direct attack by virtue of the fact the district administration is considered an administrative extension of the TTPI, who is ultimately responsible for all local actions.

The TTPI Executive does not favor Marianas separatism and apparently has attempted to force the District Administration to take an official "neutral" stance toward the separate talks. Many officials believe that Marianas "unity" with the other districts is in the best interests of Micronesia if the area is to retain political and economic vitality and if the fragmentation process is to be averted. Some TTPI employees are adamantly opposed to any U.S. military presence in the Marianas and in Micronesia; others have become too closely identified with Micronesian perspectives and values (so as to become personally interested in having a part in the creation of a new Pacific Island nation-state, and self-critical of U.S. development efforts).