



DEPARTMENT OF STATE

Washington, D.C. 20520

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March 26, 1974

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TO: M/DG - Mr. Davis
 S/IG - Mr. Sutterlin
 IO - Mr. Buffum
 S/PC - Mr. Grove

FROM: Robert S. Ingersoll *RSI*

SUBJECT: Micronesia Future Political Status

You are all aware of the problems of our administration in Micronesia, and the delicate state of the status negotiations.

FSO Robert Immerman (USUN New York) recently spent six weeks' TDY in Micronesia covering the annual session of the Congress of Micronesia. He has since prepared the attached report on his observations which I believe will interest all of you.

Given the sensitivity of the attached memorandum and many of its conclusions, I would be grateful if you would restrict tightly any onward circulation, and take special care that it is not distributed outside the Department of State.

I have already sent a copy to the Deputy Secretary. We are following up appropriately on Mr. Immerman's recommendations.

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Drafted: EA/ANP:JCDorrance:mhs
3/26/74 - X20870

Clearance: EA - Mr. Hummel *HM*

cc: USUN New York - Mr. Immerman
EA - Mr. Sneider

EXDIS REVIEW

- Cat. A - Caption removed; transferred to D/TAV
- Cat. B - Transferred to D/TAV with additional access controlled by S/S
- Cat. C - Caption and custody retained by S/S

Reviewed by: Elijah Kelly Jr.

Date: 3/10/87

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REVIEWED BY B.H. BAAS DATE 3/25/87

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MEMORANDUM FOR THE RECORD

by: FSO Robert M. Immerman
US Mission, USUN New York

March 22, 1974

Subject: IMPRESSIONS OF THE TTPI

The following are impressions of various aspects of the Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands based on six weeks of TDY with the Status Liaison Office on Saipan during the recent (January 15 - March 4) session of the Congress of Micronesia:

1) The TTPI Administration

One of two images frequently came to mind when observing the TT administration in "action",--that of an ailing, bloated whale floundering in shallow water or of a rudderless ship about to run aground on the Saipan reef. Although the TT Government is the largest single employer in Micronesia (with salaries and expenses of TTPI employees constituting more than half of the TT's annual budget of approximately \$60 million), the TT administrative bureaucracy utterly lacks direction. Not only is there no coherent program of economic development or time table of advancement towards self government but there is also an almost total lack of executive leadership in the day-to-day management of TT affairs. The High Commissioner, when not off the island lobbying on behalf of the TTPI budget or attending to "other business", appears to focus only on issues that have reached the crisis stage. For example, during February 1974 the HICOM involved himself almost exclusively with the acute supply problem created by the collapse of the government franchised shipping line (a problem clearly foreseen in the UN Visiting Mission's Report of May 1973).

It is no secret on Saipan that the Deputy High Commissioner, who might be expected to help administer the bureaucracy, is studiously ignored by the HICOM (because of a long standing personal feud), and thus plays a largely ceremonial role, representing the TTPI at assorted Pacific regional conclaves. For the last two years, the position of Executive Assistant to the HICOM has remained unfilled.

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In sum, problems fail to reach the HICOM in their early stages, decisions of the HICOM often are not implemented, incoming cables are not answered and government departments frequently operate independently of and at cross purposes with each other.

Two relatively minor but very typical examples of administration indecisiveness - tending to paralysis - this past winter: 2-1/2 weeks and considerable pressure from the Status Liaison Office were required before the TT administration focused on either 1) a State Dept. cable requesting program arrangements for a visiting Papua New Guinea diplomat or, 2) the question of whether the Administration should be represented on the TTPI delegation to the forthcoming ECAFE Conference.

With a few notable exceptions (particularly in the Attorney General's office), most of the "expatriates" (U.S. citizens) employed by the TTPI are elderly veterans of the Department of Interior's "territorial service" or recent recruits from Hawaii and the West Coast seeking security after unsuccessful political or business ventures. Both elements appear interested primarily in preserving their perquisites in the Pacific until they reach retirement age and are inclined to do as little as possible in the interim in order to avoid attracting attention to themselves. While it is administration policy that every expatriate in the TT government prepare a Micronesian to replace him and set a date by which this will be carried out, this regulation has been implemented in only a handful of cases. There are still only four Micronesians in the HICOM's approximately 15 member cabinet and many expatriates who have vacated high-level "line" positions seem to stay on as "special assistants". Micronesians employed by the Administration soon learn from their expatriate supervisors that the best way to "get ahead" is to avoid making controversial decisions. The most ambitious Micronesians tend to leave TTPI Headquarters in Saipan, either for jobs on the District level (where Micronesians are very much in control and conduct their affairs with considerable success) or to run for the Congress of Micronesia (COM) where, if elected, they frequently become the severest critics of the Administration.

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2) The Congress of Micronesia

Most Congressmen feel that they have little if any role in the making of government policy since they have only a limited influence over how the annual US Congressional appropriation is spent. They therefore alternate between harassment of the Administration (e.g. blocking of appointments, subpoenaing officials) and legislative clowning (declaring Wake Island a part of Micronesia). However, while in recent years some Congressmen have found criticism of the disorganized and defensive Administration an all too easy outlet for their frustrations, many have demonstrated that they take their responsibilities very seriously when given the opportunity. During the last COM session, attacks on the Administration and the USG took second place to remarkably candid debate about the nature of the future relationship among the very different island groups which compose Micronesia. (These debates incidentally demonstrated that no Congressman can speak for all of Micronesia at this time.)

In spite of the almost uninterrupted drumfire of COM criticism against the USG, however, most of the Micronesian politicians (who are largely American educated) continue to look to the United States when attempting to solve their problems. A recurring refrain in private conversations with COM members was the lament that the TT Administration is lacking in Americans whom they can respect. In the absence of such individuals in the Executive branch, the Congressmen, as well as other young Micronesians, rely for advice almost exclusively on Americans who are also critical of the TT Administration--young American lawyers, Micronesian Legal Services and religious organizations such as the Jesuits. Occasionally, of course, a young Micronesian "radical" educated on the Berkley or University of Hawaii's East-West Center campus and extolling the virtues of the PRC or Tanzania, finds his way onto the COM staff where his anti-American diatribes attract an undue amount of attention. TT officials tend to over-react to such criticism and to forget that this too is an American export. No Micronesian politician under the age of 40 (and this includes almost the entire membership of the COM) seems to find that Japan, the Philippines or other Pacific Island neighbors offer the TTPI any useful answers to its political and economic problems. In spite of much rhetoric to the contrary, the politicians, while searching for "Micronesian" solutions to their problems, still look to the US for most of the clues; indeed most Micronesians still appear to favor association with the U.S. over independence.

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3) Political Status

The common Micronesian refrain, when the status issue is raised, is that the US is interested in Micronesia exclusively for "selfish" military reasons (i.e. the desire for bases) and is therefore pushing the territory into a poorly understood free association status in order to protect these bases and bar the way to independence. When conversation is focused on the theme of "what do the Micronesians want?", a different song is heard -- "we haven't made up our minds". Further probing elicits the grudging admission that indefinite prolongation of the trust territory status is in Micronesia's interest since it delays the day when Micronesians must make, for the first time in modern history, a decision about their political future.

In any event, it is clear that time is not on the US side. The US in 1975 will become the last of the "administering authorities" in the UN context and the annual meetings of the Trusteeship Council will concern themselves exclusively with the TTPI. The international embarrassment which this annual exercise is likely to cause us may in the future create pressures on us to accept whatever the Micronesians propose, regardless of the price tag, rather than remain as administrators. Therefore, it is in our interest to reach an agreement sooner rather than later. Since the biggest stumbling block at present to an agreement is Micronesian uncertainty, we would be well advised to encourage actively the Micronesian side--through a series of lengthy informal consultations--to develop a consensus about their political future rather than to continue to attempt to sell them a prepackaged political solution through formal negotiations. Such informal consultations require that our talks with the Micronesians be advisory in nature rather than adversary style negotiations. Two modifications in our current negotiating stance would help to convince the Micronesian negotiators that we are not their adversaries: a) telling them clearly that we are prepared to discuss independence, free association or any other status they wish to talk about and to indicate the economic implications (financial aid possibilities) of each and b) informing them that while ideally we would like to maintain an "option" on the future use of land in Palau for military purposes, we are prepared to abandon this option if it will facilitate the smooth conclusion of an agreement.

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During the recent COM session, the Palauans emitted many island-style (and therefore not immediately understandable) signals that, while they might nod their heads and sign documents agreeing to some eventual US military presence on the island of Babelthaup, they had no intention of ever allowing the US military to gain access to their "most precious possession--land" (one of the COM's favorite cliches). Two other factors militate against US bases in Palau: 1) the nativist anti-foreign religious movement in Palau is as strong as ever; and 2) Senator Salii (whose position in Palau is a weak one) may not be able to win Palauan acceptance of a military option there. There is considerable likelihood, therefore, that even if the Congress of Micronesia were eventually to agree to some Palau "option" language, in actuality these options could never be exercised because of resistance from the local population. As the UN Visiting Mission noted last year the villages of Babelthaup are among the most beautiful and traditional of Micronesia precisely because their leaders tenaciously cling to the ways of the past and resist outside intrusions. Our experience in Japan, where US Marines attempting to exercise their rights to train on the slopes of Mt. Fuji, encountered bitter resistance from the local peasantry, might well serve as a guidepost for Micronesia.

4) State Department Representation in Micronesia

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SUMMARY CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

- 1) Appoint a senior or recently retired career Foreign Service Officer as High Commissioner. Provide him with a small (2-3 man) staff of FSO's which would coordinate the programs of the TT Administration.
- 2) Appoint more Micronesians to the High Commissioner's Cabinet. (Qualified Micronesians can easily be found for the positions of Attorney General, Director of Finance and Director of Public Works).
- 3) Appoint a Micronesian to the 3-member TT High Court, now composed exclusively of Americans.
- 4) Grant Micronesia a greater degree of self government even before the conclusion of status negotiations.
 - a) Propose to Congress of Micronesia the chartering of District governments and election of District Administrators;
 - b) eliminate the Department of Interior's final review of (and veto power over) COM legislation except in matters affecting US responsibilities for defense or foreign affairs; and
 - c) expand the COM's control over the TT budget.
- 5) Modify USG negotiating stance in future status talks by:

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- a) making explicit our offer to negotiate independence if free association is unacceptable to Micronesians;
- b) abandoning our insistence on retaining military "options" on Palau as a condition of free association; and
- c) attempting to eliminate as much as possible the "adversary style" atmosphere of negotiating sessions.

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