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DRAFT F. W. STATEMENT FOR BURTON SUB-COMMITTEE BRIEFING

Introduction

- Appearing before sub-committee to brief membership on contents of proposed Covenant to Establish a Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands in Political Union with the United States of America.
- Covenant, signed February 15, 1975, still subject to approval by Marianas people in plebiscite scheduled for June 17 and by both houses of U.S. Congress.
- Product of over two years extended negotiations, progress of which has been covered extensively with sub-committee both formally and informally each step of the way in hearings and in meetings with individual members.
- Present briefing designed to bring sub-committee members and public completely up to date before plebiscite gets underway on what came out of final negotiating session for the Northern Marianas Commonwealth and to answer questions.
- U.S. and U.N. Congress invited to send observers to plebiscite.
- Formal submission of Covenant to Congress for its approval will not occur until people of Northern Mariana Islands have voted favorably, which means that the Covenant cannot come to Congress before this July.
- Need to have Congress and people thoroughly informed meanwhile.

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## Political Background

- Covenant represents culmination of almost 25 years of effort by Northern Mariana Islands people to achieve close and permanent political union with the United States.
  - Began in early days of Trusteeship - 1950.
  - Referenda and petitions since then to U.S. and U.N.
- U.S. obligation under trusteeship agreement to let people of Trust Territory seek and find freely own political self-realization - the right of self-determination.
  - Original "accident of history" that put Marianas in with rest of TTPI under Spanish, Germans, Japanese and Trusteeship - and split them from Guam cousins.
  - Lack of cummunality, ethnically and culturally, with other districts of TTPI - like other islands of South Pacific, which have not been able to get together politically even when independent.
  - Initial U.S. efforts to seek common solution for political status of all districts of TTPI .
  - Early efforts of new Congress of Micronesia to determine political future, with 1969 report recognizing Marianas desire for union with other parts of U.S. so long as this did not threaten rights of minority.
  - U.S. response in form of offering of territorial status for entire TTPI in 1969 (rejected by COM) and commonwealth status in 1970 (also rejected).

- Preferred position of COM is "free association"; i.e., Looser arrangement, unilaterally terminable, with full internal self-government and U.S. responsibility for foreign affairs and defense.
- Marianas position of willingness to go along with other districts so long as "close and permanent" relationship with U.S. the goal, but unwilling to accept "loose and temporary" arrangement proposed by Congress of Micronesia in form of free association.
  - Initial U.S. reluctance to negotiate separately with Marianas.
  - Encouragement by JCFS leaders to separate Marianas request
  - Final U.S. acquiescence on basis of Koror petition.

#### Strategic Importance of Northern Mariana Islands

- Historic strategic importance of Marianas along with other parts of TTPI due to location as tried water and air routes.
- Battles of World War II (Saipan, Tinian, Guam).
- U.N. recognition as "strategic" trust - the only one of its kind.
- Denial to other powers of paramount importance.
- Significance of Northern Mariana Islands in terms of U.S. position as Pacific power by virtue of forward location and size.
  - Forward defense line with Guam.
  - Importance in light of recent events on mainland, particularly South East Asia.

- Difference between Asian and Pacific power.
- Non-Vulnerability to political instability and foibles of foreign governments.
- Northern Mariana Islands as protection for Guam and complement to Guam.

U.S. Military Requirements in Northern Mariana Islands

- Earlier plans for major joint service base shelved in view budget squeeze and other factors.
- Requirement still remains, but no plans approved.
- Present plans call only for:
  1. Maneuver area on Tinian for land, sea and air. force exercises, primarily by forces afloat.
  2. REhabilitation of port and airfield on Tinian.
  3. Contingency requirements on Saipan.
    - Tanapag Harbor area.
    - Joint use of Isely.
  4. Farallon de Medinilla target area.

Principal Features of Agreement

- Three major parts.
  - Consisting of preamble and 10 articles.
  - Technical Agreement on Use of Military Land Areas.
  - Negotiating History.
- Contents of Covenant.
  - Preamble - Recitation of obligations of U.S. and desires of Marianas people.
  - Article I - Political Relationship
    - Commonwealth in political union with the United States and under full U.S. sovereignty at end of Trusteeship. (§101)

- Supremacy of Constitution, federal law and Covenant (§102).
- Right of local self-government under locally adopted Constitution. (§103)
- Uninhibited power of Congress to enact legislation for Marianas.
- But Marianas must be named when laws cannot be made applicable to states - and U.S. asked to voluntarily limit exercise of authority.