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Subject: Northern Marianas Commonwealth Covenant

Signing - A "Covenant to Establish a Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands in Political Union with the United States of America" was signed in Saipan on February 15, 1975 by Ambassador F. Hayden Williams, the President's Personal Representative for Micronesian Status Negotiations, and by the Marianas Political Status Commission. This marks the conclusion of negotiations which began in December 1972.

Present Status of Northern Marianas Islands - The Northern Mariana Islands are geographically and culturally a part of the Mariana Islands of which the territory of Guam, acquired by the U.S. in 1898, forms the other part. At present the Northern Mariana Islands constitute the Mariana Islands District of the Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands (TTPI), which is administered by the United States under a Trusteeship Agreement between the Security Council of the United Nations and the United States which entered into force on July 18, 1947.

Marianas Request for Commonwealth Status - Starting in 1950, the people of the Northern Mariana Islands, through resolutions of their elected Mariana Islands District Legislature and other petitions, have repeatedly requested a close political association with the U.S. When the Joint Committee on Future Status of the Congress of Micronesia in 1971 rejected a United States offer of commonwealth status for all of the Trust Territory, the Mariana Islands District Legislature requested separate negotiations to bring the Northern Mariana Islands into a close political relationship with the United States and established the Marianas Political Status Commission to negotiate with the United States to that end. In response to that request, the U.S. in December 1972 entered into negotiations with the Marianas Political Status Commission to establish a self-governing Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands upon termination of the UN Trusteeship. Five sessions of negotiations were held, which are recorded in joint communique and other public documents.

Relationship to the United States - The Covenant provides that the Northern Mariana Islands upon termination of the Trusteeship Agreement will become a self-governing commonwealth to be known as the "Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands", in political union with and under the sovereignty of the United States of America. The people of the Northern Mariana Islands will have the right of local self-government and will govern themselves with respect to internal affairs in accordance with a Constitution of their own adoption. The United States will have complete responsibility for and authority with respect to matters relating to foreign affairs and defense affecting the Northern Mariana Islands. All persons born in the Commonwealth

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and subject to the jurisdiction of the United States will be citizens of the United States at birth. Other categories of persons specified in the Covenant will have the right to U.S. citizenship.

Other Basic Provisions of the Covenant - The Covenant further provides that the U.S. will provide direct grant assistance to the Government of the Northern Mariana Islands for an initial period of 7 years at the level of \$14 million a year. This assistance will become effective not more than 180 days after the Covenant and the Constitution of the Northern Mariana Islands have both been approved. In addition the U.S. will make available to the Northern Mariana Islands the full range of programs and services available to the territories of the United States.

The U.S. will lease approximately 18,182 acres in the Northern Mariana Islands for defense purposes, of which approximately 17,799 acres are on Tinian Island. The leases will have a term of 50 years and the U.S. Government will have the option of renewing the lease for all or part of such areas for an additional term of 50 years. In full settlement of these leases, including the renewal option, the U.S. Government will make a lump sum payment to the Government of the Northern Mariana Islands of \$19,520,600.

A substantial portion of the land to be leased will be leased back to the Government of the Northern Mariana Islands, at the sum of \$1 per acre per year, to be made available for purposes such as farming, grazing and other activities compatible with its future possible military use.

At present, the major planned use for the land on Tinian is for ground, sea and air training exercises. There are no present plans to construct any permanent structures or to station military personnel on Tinian. Present plans only call for upgrading of San Jose Harbor and West Field.

Approval Process - Article X of the Covenant provides that the Covenant will be submitted for approval to the Mariana Islands District Legislature and then to the people of the Northern Mariana Islands in a plebiscite to be called by the United States. The Mariana Islands District Legislature on February 20, 1975 unanimously passed a resolution which approved the Covenant for submission to the people of the Northern Mariana Islands in a plebiscite. A date for the plebiscite, to which the United States will invite the UN Trusteeship Council to send observers, has not yet been set. If the Covenant is approved in a plebiscite, it will then be presented to the U.S. Congress for its consideration and approval. The Northern Mariana Islands would not achieve Commonwealth status until such time

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as the Trusteeship is terminated. The United States has informed the UN Trusteeship Council that it intends to terminate the Trusteeship Agreement simultaneously for all parts of the Trust Territory and not for one part separately.

Negotiations with the Rest of Micronesia - The U.S. has been engaged in negotiations with the Joint Committee on Future Status of the Congress of Micronesia, looking toward a future political relationship of free association between the U.S. and the other districts of the Trust Territory. Under this relationship the future Government of Micronesia would have full responsibility for and authority over the internal affairs of Micronesia. The U.S. would have full responsibility for and authority over foreign affairs and over defense matters in Micronesia.

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