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Dear Colleague,

On Monday, March 10 we will be called upon to approve a seemingly innocuous piece of legislation S-326 which if approved will have important long term consequences.

Section two of S-326 makes significant military and foreign policy determinations without a semblance of adequate review. This section authorizes 1.5 million dollars "to aid in transition of the Mariana Islands to a new status as a territory of the United States". Although it provides no money to be obligated until Congress approves the pact between the islands and the United States, it would further implement a takeover plan which Congress has yet to see.

Some might say the "transition" authorization is a bit expensive since it amounts to more than one thousand dollars for every man, woman and child in the Marianas, but that is not the issue. The real question is the future status of all the islands in the Micronesia Trust Territory, of which the Marianas form just a small part. The proposal before the Senate is a step toward carving the Marianas out of the Micronesian Trust Territory and committing the United States to long term financial and defense obligations.

The United Nations entrusted Micronesia to the United States following WW II. Since then we have largely neglected the vast territory except to the extent it has been useful for military purposes. The Department of Defense now plans to build a vast new military base complex in the islands.

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The administration quite correctly asked the Legislature of Micronesia what it thought of the United States plan to carve off the Marianas from the territory. The Micronesian Legislature determined it should remain united and objected strenuously to any policy of divided rule. Nevertheless, the administration continued its dismemberment plans. Indeed, such plans have progressed to a point where a special United States Ambassador has just signed a Commonwealth agreement with a commission of Marianas citizens, and presumably this pact will be submitted to the Congress at some later date.

Set aside the fact that half the adult population of the major Mariana Island of Tinian, where the base will be built, signed a petition repudiating the negotiators, that the Commission chairman is alleged to have been speculating in land needed for the base, that the Vice-Chairman has been accused by the U.S. Trust Territory Government of pocketing \$35 thousand of public funds or that another commission member is a convicted felon who was pardoned upon taking public office. What we cannot forget is that we are being asked to approve a piece of legislation which tends to legitimize a doubtful agreement, and, what is more, it has a whiff of colonialism about it.

The Administration intends to hold a plebiscite and take over the Marianas before asking Congress to approve the just signed agreement. No doubt many of the Marianas people are now going to vote "yes" because they have been promised years

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of lucrative subsidies. According to a forthcoming study by the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, this astonishing operation may eventually cost the American taxpayer as much as two billion dollars and Congress is not going to be asked to approve these funds until it is too late to turn back.

The rest is editorial comments.