

March 7, 1975

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MEMORANDUM FOR HOWARD WILLENS

Subject: Marianas Speech

Herewith a draft Marianas speech suitable for use only by Congressmen and others of low intellect. I suggest that we try to peddle it to Jackson or Burton first, partly as a matter of courtesy to the Chairmen and partly because it would help us most if we could get either of them to give the speech. If neither of them is available, we could go for Bennett Johnston through Jack Weiss or to a number of other Congressmen or Senators with whom either of us have contacts.

At the end of the speech I would have the Covenant, the Technical Agreement, and the agreed Negotiating History printed in the Record.


Michael S. Helfer

Attachment

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Draft/MSH
March 7, 1975

MARIANAS COMMONWEALTH

Mr. _____. Mr. [Speaker] [President], on February 15, 1975, Franklin Hayden Williams, the Personal Representative of the President of the United States, and the Members of the Marianas Political Status Commission signed a "Covenant to Establish a Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands in Political Union with the United States of America." The signing took place in Saipan, in the Mariana Islands, close to 9,000 miles from Washington. But the signing will affect all of us, since the Congress will soon be asked to approve the close and permanent political relationship between the United States and the Marianas embodied in the Covenant.

The Northern Mariana Islands are an island chain located in the Western Pacific, north of the present United States Territory of Guam. The main islands in the chain are Saipan, Tinian and Rota. About three-fourths of the people in the Marianas are of Chamorro ancestry. The Marianas make up one of the six districts of the Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands, commonly known as Micronesia, which ranges across thousands of miles of ocean and includes peoples of markedly different cultural and ethnic heritages. The Trust Territory was created by the United Nations following World War II, and is administered today by the United States pursuant

to a Trusteeship Agreement with the United Nations entered into in 1947.

That Trusteeship Agreement requires the United States to "promote the development of the inhabitants of the Trust Territory toward self-government or independence, as may be appropriate to the particular circumstances of the Trust Territory and its peoples and the freely expressed wishes of the peoples concerned." The United States opened talks with a delegation from the Congress of Micronesia, including representatives from the Marianas, in September 1969 to explore future political status alternatives for the entire Trust Territory. By April 1972, it became clear that the representatives of five of the districts of the Trust Territory, not including the Marianas, would insist on a relationship with the United States known as "free association." Under such a relationship, unprecedented in American history, Micronesia would essentially be an independent and sovereign nation closely allied with the United States, particularly in the areas of national defense and foreign affairs. The free association relationship could be terminated by either side unilaterally. Negotiations relating to the terms of a free association relationship between the United States and these five districts of Micronesia are still going on.

A free association relationship with the United States was not acceptable to the people of the Marianas, however. For many years they had expressed, both in public referendum and through their elected leaders, their deeply-felt desire for a close and permanent relationship with the United States. The people of the Marianas, unlike those in the remainder of Micronesia, were and are prepared to embrace the rights and responsibilities of U.S. citizenship under our Constitution. Accordingly, representatives of the Marianas requested separate political status discussions with the United States. Recognizing that the people of the Marianas are guaranteed the right of self-determination under the Trusteeship Agreement, the United States Government agreed to these negotiations.

The negotiations began in December 1972. The Marianas were represented by the Marianas Political Status Commission, a group broadly representative of the various ethnic, political, economic and social interests in the Islands. The United States was represented by Ambassador Williams, the distinguished President of the Asia Foundation.

The culmination of the efforts of Ambassador Williams and the Marianas Commission was the signing last month of the Covenant to Establish a Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands in Political Union with the United

States of America. The Covenant has already been unani-
mously approved by the Mariana Islands District Legislature.
It will be submitted to the people of the Northern Marianas
in early summer so that they can make their views known at
the ballot box. If the people of the Marianas approve the
Covenant, we in the Congress will be asked to review and to
approve it on behalf of the people of the United States of
America. If we approve the Covenant, the close and permanent
political relationship between the United States and the
Marianas will be established and then, upon termination of
the Trusteeship Agreement by the action of the United States
and the United Nations, the Marianas will become a common-
wealth of the United States and the people of the Marianas
will become United States citizens.

The Covenant describes a political relationship
which is generally similar to the relationship between the
United States and its existing territories and the Common-
wealth of Puerto Rico, though not identical to any relation-
ship we now have. Among other things, the Covenant provides:

-- that the Marianas will become a self-
governing commonwealth under the sovereignty of the United
States;

-- that the people of the Marianas can draft
and approve their own Constitution, subject to certain
minimum requirements and subject to United States Government
approval;

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-- that the people of the Marianas will become U.S. citizens, as they desire;

-- that the United States Constitution and federal laws will generally be applicable in the Marianas;

-- that there will be appropriate revenue and taxation in the Marianas, including United States financial assistance for an initial period of time;

-- that land in the Marianas can be used by the United States for defense and civilian governmental purposes when and if needed; and

-- that the Marianas may have representation in Washington.

The Covenant is a lengthy and important document. Each member of Congress will want to review it carefully before voting to approve the close and permanent political relationship embodied in it. Like other members, I have not yet had an opportunity to review the Covenant in detail, so I must reserve final judgment as to its provisions. But it is clear from the most cursory review of the Covenant and its background that it presents to the United States an unique opportunity. Never before in American history has the United States acquired a new territory by the voluntary action of the people in that territory. We may never again have a similar opportunity. The people of the Marianas, if they approve the Covenant, will formally have asked to join

the American political family, and to undertake the responsibilities of U.S. citizenship. In view of the unique relationship between the United States and the Marianas created by the United Nations Trusteeship Agreement, this request alone -- offering as it does a just and honorable way to bring the world's only remaining Trusteeship to an end -- should move us to act. But beyond this, the Covenant provides a way for the United States to protect fully its long-standing and critical interest in peace and stability in the Western Pacific. In these circumstances, Congress should give the most serious consideration to the Covenant when it comes before us.

I ask unanimous consent that the Covenant to Establish a Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands in Political Union with the United States of America and certain accompanying documents be printed at this point in the Record.