

OFFICE FOR MICRONESIAN STATUS NEGOTIATIONS

WASHINGTON, D.C. 20240

March 13, 1975

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Memorandum

To: Norman E. Ross
Assistant Director of the President's Domestic Council

From: Adrian de Graffenried
Legal Advisor, Office for Micronesian Status Negotiations

Subject: Draft Reply for the President

Attached is a draft reply from the President which I discussed with Erlynn Ensign today.

To recap that conversation: this past February, the President's Personal Representative for the Micronesian Status Negotiations, Ambassador F. Haydn Williams, completed negotiations with the Mariana Islands Political Status Commission that will make the Northern Mariana Islands, now the Mariana Islands District of the Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands, a new United States territory - the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands - when we terminate the United Nations Trusteeship for the Pacific Islands. We signed a formal agreement (the Covenant) at the February session. By adopting the attached resolution, the local Marianas Legislature formally ratified the Covenant.

This historic step now enables the local people to vote on the Covenant in a local plebiscite to be conducted by the United States Government. If approved locally, the Covenant will then be submitted for approval by the United States Congress and enabling legislation will be enacted and ~~termination of the United Nations Trusteeship will be initiated over these islands simultaneously with the remaining islands in the Trusteeship (we are now negotiating a political status of free association with them).~~

Therefore, it is most appropriate that the President respond directly to this action by the local Marianas Legislature. I would additionally recommend that the resolution together with the response be deposited with the archives as an historical document. The Ambassador will be presenting the formal signed Covenant to the President and afterwards will deposit it with the archives.


Adrian de Graffenried

Enclosure

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Dear President Santos:

I warmly welcome the action by the Mariana Islands District Legislature in unamiouly approving the Covenant to Establish a Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands in Political Union with the United States.

This historic ratification by the elected representatives of the people of the Mariana Islands is firm evidence of the democratic values of freedom and self-determination on which our future political relationship is to be established. In approving this Covenant you have given clear support to the exemplary work of your Political Status Commission in negotiating the Covenant and you have begun the process by which the people of the Mariana Islands may exercise their sovereign right to determine their own political future. This principle is in the best of the American tradition for which this country has stood and defended since its creation in 1776.

Please give my personal regards to the members of the legislature.

With warm best wishes.

Gerald R. Ford
President
United States of America

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