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Editor
Washington Post

Your editorial entitled "Focus on Micronesia" happened to coincide with our visit to Washington to discuss the proposed Marianas Commonwealth with responsible officials within the Executive Branch and interested Members of Congress. A few clarifying comments might be of interest to your readers:

First, the negotiations regarding the future political status of Micronesia have been going on for about six years. Throughout this period there has been regular consultation with the responsible Committees of Congress by representatives of the Micronesia and the Executive Branch. It may well come as a surprise to these Members of Congress (Congressman Philip Burton and Senator Jackson, to name two) to learn that the time for Congressional oversight has just arrived.

Second, the Marianas people too would have preferred a comprehensive approach for all of Micronesia -- if such an approach would have suited their aspirations. Unfortunately, this proved impossible once the other five districts rejected the alternative of a commonwealth relationship with the United States. It was only in 1972 -- after three years of full Marianas participation

in Micronesia wide status negotiations -- that the Marianas requested separate status talks with the United States. Our people have repeatedly for more than 20 years expressed their desire for political union with the United States, based upon their experience with the United States as Administering Authority and their desire to enjoy a democratic form of government under the U.S. Constitution.

Third, we do not see any foundation in fact for your hope that delaying consideration of the Marianas Commonwealth will bring the United States closer to a solution for the other five districts. Quite the contrary might be true: favorable Congressional consideration of the Marianas arrangement (if it is approved by the Marianas people on a plebiscite) might provide needed focus and impetus for the people of the other five districts. In addition, your editorial neglects to emphasize the obligations of the United States to terminate the trusteeship as soon as possible so that the people of the Marianas and all of Micronesia can begin to enjoy the opportunities and challenges of self-government which ha^{ve} been denied them for centuries.

Fourth, we can assure you that the option of independence has been thoroughly examined by our people.

After 400 years of domination by foreign powers, we are all too aware of the risks which small island communities face in the world. We also have examined the experience of other islands -- in the Caribbean as well as the Pacific -- and are persuaded that our political freedom and development potential can be best realized by close affiliation with the United States.

Fifth, ~~although the possible military plans for Tinian present an easy target in this day and age, it might be well to put them in perspective.~~ The proposed Commonwealth for the Marianas should be considered independently of any Department of Defense plans for constructing a facility on Tinian. Under the proposed Commonwealth agreement, the Marianas people promise to lease certain lands for defense purposes to the United States. It will be entirely up to Congress to decide whether and when the funds necessary to lease the land and construct any facilities should be authorized. If the lease money is not available within five years after the Commonwealth is established, then the lands reserved for military use will be released for civilian development. We hope, therefore, that the human aspects of the proposed Commonwealth will be considered on their merits -- leaving the debate over military plans for Tinian for a later day.

Lastly, your suggestion that the right of self-determination being asserted by the Marianas is "American-taught" seems unnecessarily deprecatory. We expect it is hard for Americans to realize the importance the Marianas attach to the right of self-determination guaranteed them under the United Nations Charter and the 1947 Trusteeship Agreement. We are confident that neither the citizens of the United States nor the Washington Post would want to deny the Marianas this basic right of self-determination by forcing them into a future political status contrary to the wishes of the Marianas people. It may well be that in dealing with Micronesia, as with other contemporary public issues, theory must give way to fact and ~~our~~^{the} best approach is to support efforts like these in the Marianas which advance human freedom and dignity without encroaching on the rights of others.

Sincerely,