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SUBJECT: PRESS RELEASE ON MARIANAS PLEBISCITE

PASS STATUS LNO BERGESON

COMTWELVE FOR AMBASSADOR WILLIAMS.....

DEFENSE FOR OSD/ISA

WHITE HOUSE FOR NSC

USUN FOR AMBASSADOR WHITE

INTERIOR FOR DOTA

FOLLOWING PRESS RELEASE ISSUED BY SECRETARY OF THE INTERIOR

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE APRIL 11, 1975:

QUOTE: SECRETARY MORTON ACTS TO AUTHORIZE PLEBISCITE  
 - IN THE NORTHERN MARIANA ISLANDS FOR JUNE 17, 1975  
 - SECRETARY OF THE INTERIOR ROGERS C.B. MORTON TODAY  
 ISSUED A PROCLAMATION CALLING FOR A PLEBISCITE TO BE HELD  
 ON TUESDAY, JUNE 17, 1975, IN ORDER THAT THE PEOPLE OF THE  
 NORTHERN MARIANA ISLANDS, PRESENTLY ADMINISTERED AS A PART  
 OF THE TRUST TERRITORY OF THE PACIFIC ISLANDS, MAY DECIDE  
 WHETHER THEY WISH TO BECOME A COMMONWEALTH OF THE UNITED  
 STATES. THE ISLANDS, INCLUDING SAIPAN, TINIAN, ROTA AND  
 OTHERS, LIE NORTH OF THE U.S. TERRITORY OF GUAM.

- ON FEBRUARY 10, 1975, THE MARIANAS POLITICAL STATUS  
 COMMISSION AND THE PRESIDENT'S PERSONAL REPRESENTATIVE,  
 AMBASSADOR WAYDUN WILLIAMS, SIGNED A COVENANT TO ESTABLISH  
 A COMMONWEALTH OF THE NORTHERN MARIANA ISLANDS IN POLITI-  
 CAL UNION WITH THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA. THE COVE-  
 NANT CALLS FOR THE HOLDING OF SUCH A PLEBISCITE. IF THE  
 COVENANT IS APPROVED BY THE PEOPLE OF THE MARIANA ISLANDS

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DISTRICT AND SUBSEQUENTLY THE CONGRESS OF THE UNITED STATES, THE NORTHERN MARIANA ISLANDS WOULD BECOME A U.S. COMMONWEALTH.

- IN ANNOUNCING THE PLEBISCITE SECRETARY MORTON STATED, "THE PLEBISCITE WILL BE HELD IN A FAIR AND IMPARTIAL MANNER UNDER THE SUPERVISION OF A PLEBISCITE COMMISSIONER. THE PRESIDENT HAS DESIGNATED MR. ERWIN D. CANHAM, TO SERVE IN THAT POSITION AS HIS PERSONAL REPRESENTATIVE." SECRETARY MORTON ALSO DECLARED, "OBSERVERS FROM THE UNITED NATIONS AND THE U.S. CONGRESS WILL BE WELCOME TO WITNESS THE PLEBISCITE AS WELL AS THE PLEBISCITE EDUCATION PROGRAM, THE REGISTRATION OF VOTERS, AND OTHER PRE- PLEBISCITE ACTIVITIES."

- COMMENTING ON MR. CANHAM'S APPOINTMENT, SECRETARY MORTON NOTED HIS LONG AND DISTINGUISHED RECORD OF PUBLIC SERVICE INCLUDING A PERIOD AS A UNITED STATES DELEGATE TO THE UNITED NATIONS DURING ITS FORMATIVE YEARS, AND EXPRESSED APPRECIATION FOR HIS WILLINGNESS TO ACCEPT THE PRESENT APPOINTMENT. MR. CANHAM WAS FOR MANY YEARS EDITOR-IN-CHIEF OF THE CHRISTIAN SCIENCE MONITOR AND IS PRESENTLY EDITOR EMERITUS. HE HAS PARTICIPATED IN THE WORK OF COMMISSIONS CONCERNED WITH PUBLIC AFFAIRS AND HOLDS HONORARY DEGREES OR CITATIONS FROM SEVERAL AMERICAN UNIVERSITIES AND FROM THE GOVERNMENTS OF ENGLAND, FRANCE, GREECE, GERMANY AND AUSTRIA."

- SECRETARY MORTON ALSO ISSUED A SECRETARIAL ORDER THAT GRANTS THE AUTHORITY AND ESTABLISHES ADMINISTRATIVE RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE HOLDING OF A PLEBISCITE. THE ACTION CREATES THE PLEBISCITE COMMISSIONER POSITION, OUTLINES THE RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE TRUST TERRITORY OF THE PACIFIC ISLANDS ADMINISTRATION, ESTABLISHES A NORTHERN MARIANA ISLANDS PLEBISCITE ADVISORY COMMITTEE, OUTLINES THE FUNCTION OF A PLEBISCITE EDUCATION PROGRAM, CREATES A VOTER REGISTRATION BOARD, ESTABLISHES VOTER QUALIFICATIONS, AND AUTHORIZES A SPECIAL PLEBISCITE APPELLATE COURT.

- ON NUMEROUS OCCASIONS OVER MORE THAN TWENTY YEARS THE PEOPLE OF THE NORTHERN MARIANA ISLANDS HAVE SOUGHT A CLOSE AND ENDURING ASSOCIATION WITH THE UNITED STATES. SECRETARY MORTON'S ACTION WILL PROVIDE AN OPPORTUNITY FOR

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THEM TO DECIDE, PURSUANT TO THEIR RIGHT OF SELF-DETERMINATION, WHETHER THEY WISH TO BECOME A COMMONWEALTH IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE TERMS OF THE COVENANT. AT LEAST 55 OF THE VALID VOTES CAST IN THE PLEBISCITE MUST FAVOR COMMONWEALTH STATUS BEFORE THE COVENANT IS PRESENTED TO THE UNITED STATES CONGRESS FOR ITS APPROVAL.  
 END QUOTE.  
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