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MARIANAS PLEBISCITE-FIRST WEEKLY REPORT (U)
A. STATUS LNO 030
C. STATE 091015

1. (C) SUMMARY: TEMPO OF PLEBISCITE RELATED ACTIVITY IS INCREASING AND MPSC HAS RESUMED PUBLICATION OF NEWSLETTER AND HELD VILLAGE MEETINGS LAST WEEK, INCLUDING VISITS TO ROYA AND TINIAN. MOST OF SPOKEN OPONENT OF COVENANT IS REP OSCAR RASA WHO HAS SOUGHT SUPPORT IN TERRITORIAL PARTY AND UNITED CAROLINIAN ASSOCIATION (UCA). HIS ACTIVITIES ARE OPENLY SUBSIDIZED BY \$10,000 OF CONGRESS OF MICRONESIA (COM) "LOYALTY" FUNDS. LOCAL RADIO AND TV GAVE FULL COVERAGE WEEKEND OF APRIL 12-13 TO SECRETARIAL PROCLAMATION CALLING A PLEBISCITE THE SECRETARIAL ORDER DEFINING AUTHORITY AND PROCEDURES FOR HOLDING THE PLEBISCITE, AND THE PRESIDENTIAL LETTER NAMING ERWIN D. CANHAM AS PLEBISCITE COMMISSIONER. END SUMMARY.

2. (C) MPSC PROGRAM TO EXPLAIN COVENANT, INTERRUPTED BY RECALL OF IT

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PUBLIC AFFAIRS ADVISOR GEORGE CALLISON ON MARCH 29, WAS RESUMED. THIRD ISSUE OF COVENANT NEWSLETTER, DATED APRIL 11, APPEARED APRIL 14 AND MPSC MET WITH GROUPS IN VILLAGES EVENINGS OF APRIL 7-13. MPSC IS SEEKING MAXIMUM MILEAGE FROM PANGELINAN/TENORIO CALL ON PRESIDENT FORD; COVENANT NEWSLETTER HAS HALF PAGE PICTURE OF MEETING AND ARTICLE BY GANNETT NEWSPAPER STAFF WRITER JOHN SIMMONDS PLAYING UP PRESIDENTIAL SUPPORT FOR COMMONWEALTH. OTHER ISSUE FROM MPSC POINT OF VIEW IS RELEASE OF \$10,300 FROM CONGRESS OF MICRONESIA FUNDS TO SUPPORT "POLITICAL EDUCATION" IN THE MARIANAS, A MOVE DESCRIBED IN PUBLISHED LETTER BY SENATOR TENORIO AS "A MALICIOUS ATTEMPT BY OUTSIDERS TO UNDERMINE THE UPCOMING PLEBISCITE." (ALTHOUGH COM FUNDING REPORTEDLY APPROVED MARCH 5, IT ONLY BECAME KNOWN TO THIS OFFICE SOME DAYS LATER.) CURRENT ISSUE OF COVENANT NEWSLETTER INCLUDES REPRODUCTION OF \$10,222 CHECK PAYABLE TO ALPHONSO RASA (OSCAR'S BROTHER) AND FELICIDAD OGUMORO (A UCA MEMBER) ALONG WITH REPRODUCTION OF CABLE BY SENATE PRESIDENT NAKAYAMA AUTHORIZING RELEASE. MPSC SPONSORED SAIPAN VILLAGE MEETINGS REPORTEDLY ATTENDED BY 40-50 PERSONS EACH, WHILE ROTA MEETING TURNOUT, AS PANGELINAN TOLD ME, WAS SOME 400 PEOPLE.

3. (U) RELEASE OF COM FUNDS FOR USE IN MARIANAS FIRST PUBLICIZED IN APRIL 7 ISSUE OF PACIFIC DAILY NEWS (PDN). ALTHOUGH FACT HAD BEEN KNOWN TO INTERESTED PARTIES, INCLUDING MPSC, FOR TWO WEEKS OR MORE, PDN ARTICLE QUOTED OSCAR RASA AS SAYING THAT FUNDS WOULD BE USED BY HIS AND CONGRESSMAN MAFNAS' "COMMITTEE TO POINT OUT MERITS AND DEMERITS OF THREE POLITICAL ALTERNATIVES--COMMONWEALTH, FREE ASSOCIATION, AND INDEPENDENCE" TO PROMOTE UNDERSTANDING OF THE CHOICES FACING THE PEOPLE OF THE MARIANAS. ACTING UCA PRESIDENT ABEL OLOPAI WAS QUOTED IN AN APRIL 8 COM PRESS RELEASE AS SAYING HIS ORGANIZATION WOULD USE FUNDS TO FINANCE A "BALANCED POLITICAL EDUCATION PROGRAM IN THE CAROLINIAN LANGUAGE" AND THAT IT WAS NECESSARY TO APPROACH CONGRESS FOR SUPPORT BECAUSE OF NEGLECT OF CAROLINIANS BY MARIANA DISTRICT LEGISLATURE, SAIPAN MUNICIPAL COUNCIL, AND MPSC. THE COM RELEASE ALSO QUOTED OLOPAI AS CHARGING SENATOR PETE TENORIO WITH HAVING "DECEIVED" THE VOTERS AND "TURNED TRAITOR" ON HIS CAMPAIGN PROMISES. A REFERENCE TO THE FACT THAT DURING LAST FALL'S ELECTION CAMPAIGN TENORIO ADVOCATED GOING SLOW ON COMMONWEALTH NEGOTIATIONS.

4. (C) MAJOR ISSUES RAISED BY OPPONENTS ARE ALLEGED INABILITY OF CAROLINIANS TO HOLD LAND UNDER TERMS OF COVENANT, POSSIBILITY THAT COVENANT WILL BE UNACCEPTABLE TO U.S. CONGRESS, POSSIBLE TERMINATION

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NATION OF FINANCIAL SUPPORT TO COMMONWEALTH AFTER SEVEN YEARS. DANGER OF LOCAL POPULATION BECOMING A MINORITY DUE TO IMMIGRATION OF FILIPINOS AND MAINLAND AMERICANS. FEAR THAT MAINLAND AMERICANS WILL BE BETTER QUALIFIED FOR EMPLOYMENT AND DISPLACE NATIVE RESIDENTS. SUPREMACY OF U.S. CONSTITUTION, AND ABSENCE OF UNILATERAL TERMINATION CLAUSE. WELL PUBLICIZED STATEMENTS BY OLOPAI THAT CAROLINIAN WILL NOT BE ABLE TO HOLD LAND UNDER COVENANT WERE OFFICIALLY DENIED APRIL 9 IN A JOINT PRESS RELEASE BY MPSC CHAIRMAN AND STATUS LNO. ACTING AS SPOKESMAN FOR AMB WILLIAMS. (THIS WAS FOLLOWED BY RATHER LATE REJOINDER IN RASA'S "FREE PRESS" THAT THIS WAS QUESTION FOR CONSTITUTIONAL LAWYER, WHICH WILLIAMS' SPOKESMAN WAS NOT.)

5. (C) RASA'S "FREE PRESS" EXPANDED TO TWELVE PAGES ON APRIL 4 AND HAS STEPPED UP DIRECT ATTACKS ON THE COVENANT. PAID ADVERTISEMENTS AGAINST THE COVENANT ALSO APPEARED IN APRIL 11 ISSUE OF MARIANAS VARIETY NEWS AND VIEWS. ALTHOUGH CAREFULLY FOLLOWING THEME OF "COMMONWEALTH YES, COVENANT NO," FREE PRESS AND PAID ADVERTISEMENTS INDICATE OPPOSITION TO TERMS INHERENT IN COMMONWEALTH RELATIONSHIP SUCH AS EXTENSION OF U.S. SOVEREIGNTY IN THE FORM OF CONSTITUTIONAL SUPREMACY AND RIGHT OF AMERICANS TO MOVE FREELY TO AND WORK IN THE NORTHERN MARIANAS. AGAINST BACKDROP OF SUPPORT FOR COMMONWEALTH BY BOTH POLITICAL PARTIES AND MOST MARIANAS PEOPLE, RASA IS ATTEMPTING TO BUILD OPPOSITION ON INDIVIDUAL OBJECTION TO SPECIFIC FEATURES OF COVENANT. SOURCES INDICATE HE HAS EXPLICITLY STATED THAT COVENANT CAN BE RENEGOTIATED FOR BETTER TERMS DUE TO U.S. STRATEGIC NEEDS, ALTHOUGH FIRST REACTION IN SAIPAN SEEMS TO BE THAT FORMULATION OF NEGATIVE QUESTION ON PLEBISCITE "IMPLIES" THAT MARIANAS WILL BE THROWN BACK INTO POT WITH REST OF IT IF COVENANT DEFEATED. OPPONENTS OF COVENANT CAN BE EXPECTED TO REALIZE SOON THAT NEGATIVE ANSWER DOES NOT FORECLOSE POSSIBILITY OF NEW SEPARATE NEGOTIATIONS AND IN FACT ONLY ASSERTS THE "RIGHT" OF THE MARIANAS TO DETERMINE THEIR FUTURE IN UNISON WITH THE REST OF MICRONESIA. A RIGHT THEY HAVE ALWAYS HAD.

6. (C) ANNOUNCEMENT IN WASHINGTON THAT THE MARIANAS PLEBISCITE WILL BE HELD JUN 17 AND NAMING ERWIN G. CASHMAN AS PLEBISCITE COMMISSIONER RECEIVED FULL PLAY ON THE WEEKEND OF APRIL 12-13 ON RADIO AND TELEVISION. THE SUNDAY PCN CARRIED ON PAGE ONE THE FACT THAT A DATE HAD BEEN ESTABLISHED AND A LENGTHY, FACTUAL ARTICLE SUMMARIZING THE SECRETARIAL ACTION WAS CARRIED ON INSIDE PAGES APRIL 15.

7. (C) RASA'S ACTIVITIES AND IN PARTICULAR THE LACK OF POSITIVE PRO-COVENANT LEADERSHIP IN THE CAROLINIAN COMMUNITY IS CAUSING PRO-

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BLEMS FOR TERRITORIAL PARTY. PARTY'S RECOGNIZED LEADERS, INCLUDING DR. PALACIOS AND SENATOR TENORIO, ARE SOLIDLY BEHIND COVENANT AND HAVE SO FAR MAINTAINED CONTROL OF PARTY'S POSITION. THEY ARE SEEKING TO AVOID POLARIZATION OF UCA AND CAROLINIANS INTO AN ANTI-COVENANT GROUP WHICH WOULD MAKE MINORITY STATUS OF CAROLINIANS MORE CONSPICUOUS IN THE FUTURE. SO FAR, SO GOOD. BERGESSEN SENDS.
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