

MAY 28 1975

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HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

May 15, 1975

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MARSHALLS DISTRICT

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Kuniwa Nakamura

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PONAPE DISTRICT

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Rasio Moses

Edgar Edwards

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TRUK DISTRICT

Chira Albert

Sesoso Maruo

Lambert Aafin

Raymond Setik

Kallisto Refonobel

YAP DISTRICT

Luke Tman

John Haglelgam

The Honorable Dale Bumpers
6317 Dirksen Office Building
Washington, D. C. 20510

Dear Senator Bumpers:

The purpose of this letter is to inform you of certain actions now being contemplated by the executive branch of your government, the Department of Interior and the Office of Micronesian Status Negotiations in particular, to partition the Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands prior to termination of the United Nations Trusteeship Agreement. At the same time, I also wish to share with you the sentiments of the people I represent in our national legislature, the Congress of Micronesia, regarding the sensitive question of Marianas separation from the other districts of Micronesia.

Following an announcement in 1972 that then President Nixon's representative to the Micronesian Status Negotiations would initiate separate future political status negotiations with the Mariana Islands District, a report by the 1973 United Nations Visiting Mission to Micronesia stated:

"We wish to emphasize here, that although the Micronesians themselves must work out for themselves what kind of future links they wish to have with one another, the administration (U.S.) is still at this state obligated to promote national unity in every way possible." (emphasis added)

Yet, contrary to this recommendation, plans are now being formulated to issue an executive order to divide our islands from our brothers and sisters in the other districts of Micronesia before your Congress will have the opportunity to review the proposed Covenant for a Marianas Commonwealth.

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MPSC - new
File -
Covenant in
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The net effect of this action will be obvious. A third U.S.-funded political entity will be created in the islands of Micronesia, before the United States Congress will have enjoyed an opportunity to weigh the merits of such an arrangement. All three governments - the unincorporated U.S. territory of Guam, the new Marianas commonwealth, and the rest of Micronesia, which is presently negotiating a "free association" status with your country -- will each be financed by American taxpayers.

A plebiscite is scheduled to be held here in June with only 55 percent approval required to permanently link the Marianas to your country. If accepted by the Marianas voters, the majority of whom lack formal education, an executive order will be issued immediately, according to plans already announced by Interior, to cancel Marianas participation in our national Congress of Micronesia, and in the Micronesian Constitutional Convention which will convene on Saipan, July 12, 1975.

It should be mentioned at this point that every vigorous pro-separatist representative in our national Congress was tossed out of office during our November 1974 congressional election, including the chairman of the Marianas Status Commission. Unfortunately, our "state" legislature, the Marianas District Legislature, which created and determined the membership of our status commission, holds elections only every four years and, therefore, has not yet been affected by the rapidly changing sentiments of local voters, which, in my opinion, have drastically changed since the provisions of the proposed status agreement have become public knowledge. Yet, before victorious representatives-elect, who advocated a "go slow" approach in our negotiations, were sworn into office and new members appointed to our status commission, the status negotiations were suddenly concluded.

In short, the United States negotiators and the newly-defeated members of the Marianas Status Commission who proved so accommodating to the U.S. in the past, simply acted as if the election never happened. The defeated chairman of the Marianas Status Commission, Edward Pangelinan, who served on that body by virtue of being a member of the national Congress of Micronesia's Joint Committee on Future Status, was forced to step down from the Marianas Status Commission. Shortly thereafter, however, Pangelinan was appointed by the mayor of Saipan to fill a sudden vacancy on the Commission.

As an elected representative of the Marianas people, I strongly believe that the executive branch of your Government

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would be committing a very grave injustice by separating our islands before your Congress has reviewed the covenant agreement. If you decide to reject part of that agreement after we are separated, such as that part guaranteeing exclusive ownership of land only to U. S. citizens of "Marianas descent", for example, what alternative will our people have then? In short, I condemn any and all actions, such as an executive order by the Secretary of Interior, which will result in division of the Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands and cancel Marianas participation in our national Congress and Micronesian Constitutional Convention before the United States Congress has ratified the common-wealth covenant agreement.

Furthermore, there are a number of legitimate and very crucial concerns which deserve public debate and attention before the scheduled June 17 plebiscite, but which unfortunately I feel cannot seriously be dealt with by our generally uneducated voters in the Mariana Islands.

First, the people of the Marianas favor provisions that prevent outsiders from buying up our precious acreage. However, I have serious reservations as to whether the proposed "covenant's" discriminatory restrictions (only U.S. citizens of "Marianas Descent" will be permitted to own land) will pass the constitutional muster with the Supreme Court of the United States. For us to conclude a political status agreement where this vital issue is in doubt seems to me, suicidal.

Second, my constituents are very much concerned over the likely influx of American-owned business ventures (now regarded as 'foreign') to the Northern Mariana Islands, driving our own, perhaps less efficient businessmen, into insolvency. Under present law, we are able to decide who may or may not do business here. Under the proposed "covenant", we will have no such control.

Third, as a resident of the Northern Marianas, and with all deference to your own position as a member of the United States Congress, I am deeply disturbed that a future Congress of the United States, could drastically modify the proposed "covenant" agreement, exercising its plenary powers under Article 4, Clause 3, Paragraph 2 of the U.S. Constitution. While your Congress clearly has the power to alter the "covenant" through subsequent passage of a statute, it is equally clear that the people of the Marianas have no corresponding right. And, in fact, Ambassador Williams, the top U.S. negotiator, has never said, to my knowledge,

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that the people of the Marianas will be entitled to a second referendum, to approve or disapprove any changes the Congress of the United States might make before approving the Covenant.

Finally, I firmly agree with the words contained in the Charter of the United Nations Declaration Regarding Non-Self Governing Territories which state:

"Members of the United Nations which have or assume responsibilities for the administration of territories...recognize the principle that the interests of the inhabitants of these territories are paramount, and accept as a sacred trust obligation to promote to the utmost...the well-being of the inhabitants of these territories..."

Because of these obligations, we believe that your responsibilities to the people of Micronesia and the Marianas, are greater than your obligations to your own citizens at home in America because we do not enjoy full political and economic freedom. Likewise, I strongly believe that the present agreement between the Marianas Status Commission and your executive branch will be unacceptable not only to your Congress, but to the Marianas people as well. We welcome any agreement whereby the interests of both sides are protected, including your strategic interests in the Western Pacific, but I feel the United States Congress must have the opportunity to approve or reject the proposed Marianas status agreement, before partitioning of Micronesia by your executive branch is actually carried out.

I believe that the present situation in the Northern Marianas, as I have described it (and I urge your staff to verify my statements so that there may be no doubt as to my veracity), merits the closest attention of the members of the United States Congress.

Sincerely,



Representative Oscar C. Rasa
Marianas Delegation
Congress of Micronesia
Member, Joint Committee on Future Status
and Marianas Status Commission

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