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DEPARTMENT OF STATE/A/CDC/MR

REVIEWED BY B. H. BAAS DATE 3/27/87

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May 21, 1975

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TO: Director, Office for Micronesian Status Negotiations

FROM: John F. Knowles, Department of State (EA/ANP)

SUBJECT: Position of Department of State on
Revision of "No" Option on Marianas
Plebiscite Ballot

The Department of State believes that the United States Government should not, at this late stage, change the wording of the "no" option on the Marianas plebiscite ballot unless there are clearly compelling reasons to do so. The Department is not aware of any such compelling reasons.

The present wording was agreed upon by the agencies of the U.S. Government concerned only after the most careful consideration in which it was agreed that the present wording satisfied the essential requirement of fairness and impartiality and respected the rights of the people of the Northern Mariana Islands, including the Carolinians. The Department of State continues to believe that the wording of the ballot meets these requirements.

In considering this matter, we draw to your attention that the wording of the plebiscite ballot including the "no" option has been publicly announced by the Secretary of the Interior in a proclamation and has been made known in particular to the people of the Northern Mariana Islands and the United Nations Trusteeship Council which has been asked to consider at its annual session, which begins on May 27, sending a Special Visiting Mission to observe the plebiscite. We also draw to your attention the fact that the plebiscite is scheduled to be held on June 17, in less than one month's time.

In these circumstances, for the United States Government to change the wording of the ballot would inevitably cause confusion in the minds of the voters of the Northern Mariana Islands and among the members of the UN Trusteeship Council, lending

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credence to unfounded allegations that the United States had initially planned to conduct the plebiscite in an unfair manner that would violate the rights of the people of the Northern Mariana Islands including the Carolinians.

Should other agencies concerned believe that adherence to the present wording of the ballot would have deleterious consequences for U.S. interests, the Department of State requests that it be informed and consulted as soon as possible.

Drafted: EA/ANP:JFKNowles:mhs
5/21/75:x20870

Concurrence: L/UNA:ASurena
IO/UNP:MWilliamson
EA:JOZurhellen (subs)

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