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Memorandum of Conversation P750103-1625

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DATE: June 9, 1975
TIME: 3:30 PM
PLACE: Mr. Ingersoll's Office

SUBJECT: UN Observation of Marianas Plebiscite

PARTICIPANTS: UN Special Visiting Mission

Ambassador James Murray, President of UN Trusteeship Council (UNTC), UK Representative on UNTC, Chairman of Visiting Mission

Bertrand de Guilhem de Lataillade, French Representative on UNTC and on Visiting Mission

John Melhuish, Chief of UN Political Section, Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Australian Representative on Visiting Mission

Girma Abebe, Chairman of Trusteeship Council

George Anderson, Trusteeship Council staff member

United States

The Deputy Secretary

Robert O. Blake, Deputy Assistant Secretary, IO

John F. Knowles, Deputy Director, EA/ANP (notetaker)

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The UN Special Visiting Mission paid a brief courtesy call on the Deputy Secretary just before leaving Washington to observe the plebiscite to be held in the Northern Mariana Islands on June 17.

After introducing the members of the Visiting Mission, Ambassador Murray expressed appreciation for the admirable briefings which the

EA/ANP: JF Knowles:mhs
(Drafting Office and Officer)

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Visiting Mission had been given earlier in the day by the Office of Territorial Affairs of the Department of the Interior and by the Office for Micronesian Status Negotiations. The Deputy Secretary responded that he was pleased that the Visiting Mission had been able to come to Washington prior to their departure for Saipan.

The Deputy Secretary asked the Ambassador whether he would be seeing Mr. Erwin Canham in Saipan, remarking that Mr. Canham was an excellent choice as Plebiscite Commissioner. The Ambassador replied that the Visiting Mission expected to see a great deal of Mr. Canham in the course of carrying out its responsibilities to observe the June 17 plebiscite. He commented that Mr. Canham was a remarkable man, another of that group of older men including Ambassador Bunker and Ambassador Bruce who had remained active in the public service. The Deputy Secretary said he had seen Mr. Canham before he left for Saipan. Mr. Canham had been very active all his life and had been an observer of international relations, as a reporter and as an editor, for many years.

The Deputy Secretary then asked what the Visiting Mission would actually do in the Northern Marianas. Ambassador Murray explained that the resolution adopted by the Trusteeship Council directed the Visiting Mission to observe the plebiscite, including the campaign and polling arrangements, the casting of votes, and the counting of ballots. He commented that he had been a member of the UN Visiting Mission to the Gilbert and Ellice Islands in 1974 (which observed a referendum in which the Ellice Islanders voted to separate from the Gilbert Islands), which had been subject to the same allegations about an imperialist plot that are now being made against the United States. Mr. de Lataillade remarked that he had been a member of the Visiting Mission to the Cameroons and Togoland. Ambassador Murray noted that all three members of this Visiting Mission to the Northern Marianas were from countries with a lot of experience in administering territories in the Pacific. He supposed that the Visiting Mission would have to ask whether the people of the Northern Marianas knew what they were voting on. He understood that there were about 5200 registered voters of whom only 22 lived in the islands north of Saipan.

Ambassador Murray noted that there had been considerable discussion about the rest of Micronesia during the Trusteeship Council proceedings. The Deputy Secretary remarked that our negotiations concerning the future political status of the rest of Micronesia appeared to be at a stalemate. Ambassador Murray said he planned to try and see Ambassador Williams in San Francisco enroute to Saipan. Ambassador Williams had been his neighbor when he was the British Consul General in San Francisco.

The Deputy Secretary wished the Visiting Mission well and said we were anxious that the plebiscite come off in a proper manner. Ambassador Murray said that he was sure there was no doubt of that at all, adding that the Visiting Mission hoped to observe the plebiscite in a proper manner.

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As the Visiting Mission was leaving, Ambassador Murray remarked to the Deputy Secretary that he was going to Saipan in three capacities: as a UN official, as a diplomat of Great Britain which did not wish to cause any problem for its American ally, and as head of a UN Visiting Mission charged with observing the plebiscite on behalf of the UN. He hoped that there would prove to be no conflict in discharging these various responsibilities.

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Concurrence: IO - Ambassador Blake (draft)
EA - PDelVecchio
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