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SUBJECT: Congressional Action on Marianas Commonwealth Covenant

PARTICIPANTS:

- Robert Ingersoll, Acting Secretary and Chairman, NSC Under Secretaries Committee
- Ambassador F. Hayden Williams, The President's Personal Representative for Micronesian Status Negotiations
- John F. Knowles, Deputy Director, EA/ANP (Notetaker)
- Suzanne Butcher, D

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Ambassador Williams came in at his request to report to Mr. Ingersoll on the timetable for Congressional consideration of the Northern Marianas Commonwealth Covenant and to ask for Mr. Ingersoll's assistance in arranging for the President to brief Congressional leaders on the Covenant before the House vote.

The Ambassador began by saying that the House Subcommittee on Territorial and Insular Affairs would hold hearings on the Covenant on Monday, July 14. Witnesses invited to testify included the president of the Senate and the Speaker of the House of the Congress of Micronesia, who might not come but who were invited to send representatives. Hence, there might be some witnesses at the hearings who would oppose the Covenant. There might also be testimony from other opponents such as the Friends of Micronesia, made up of a nucleus of former Peace Corps members who had served in Micronesia, and the Quakers who might oppose in the belief that nuclear weapons would be stored in the Northern Marianas.

The Ambassador said that Congressman Philip Burton, Chairman of the Interior Subcommittee, had taken a real interest in the Marianas Covenant; he had had perhaps a dozen discussions with Burton on the subject. Burton wanted to have the Covenant acted

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upon by the full House Interior Committee on Wednesday, July 16, and by the full House on Monday, July 21. The Senate Interior Committee was scheduled to hold its hearings on July 23 or 24.

The Ambassador went on to say that there was one complicating factor, namely, that Burton had added two sections to the draft Joint Resolution approving the Covenant which the President had sent to the Congress. One section would authorize 100% payment of adjudicated Micronesian war claims. The other section would authorize the President to extend Federal programs to all US territories and to the other districts of the Trust Territory (i.e., all Federal programs providing grant, loan, and loan guarantee or other assistance to the States).

The Ambassador said that Burton could turn on us if the Administration opposed these two new sections. He was sorry that Burton had added these two things. Micronesian war claims was a very complicated subject; only partial payment was possible at present, and war claims applied to all of the Trust Territory, not just the Northern Marianas. The other section applied to all the US territories. By adding these two sections, Burton felt he could win some votes in the Congress. The Congressional representatives of Guam, Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands each had a vote in the Interior Committee, and all three were co-sponsors of the Joint Resolution which Burton had introduced.

The Ambassador added that Burton wanted to introduce the Joint Resolution on the floor of the House under the "no amendment" rule, which requires a 2/3rds vote. Burton was "king caucus" and the Ambassador didn't feel that he could challenge Burton's judgment.

The Ambassador said that the Senate side was more difficult. For one thing, there were the anti-Jackson Senators. He noted that Senator Gary Hart was leading the fight against the Marianas Covenant.

Hence, the Ambassador said, he had come to Mr. Ingersoll. Burton and some of Senator Jackson's staff were suggesting a Presidential briefing of Congressional leaders. The President might have mentioned the Marianas Covenant in his meeting with them that morning. The NSC staff had recommended a Presidential briefing and felt that any indication of support from Mr. Ingersoll, as Chairman of the Under Secretaries Committee, would be helpful.

Mr. Ingersoll inquired whether Interior was pushing for a Presidential briefing. The Ambassador replied that he had not asked Interior to do so but of course could. Mr. Ingersoll

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remarked that State's Congressional liaison staff, H, should work with Interior on building congressional support for the Covenant. Ambassador Williams pointed out that H had been participating in interagency meetings of Congressional liaison staff on this subject.

Mr. Ingersoll told the Ambassador that he would call General Snowcroft at the White House though this was a domestic rather than a foreign policy issue. The Ambassador said it was important that we not take Congressional approval of the Covenant for granted.

Mr. Ingersoll asked what lobbying Interior had done on the Marianas Covenant. The Ambassador replied that this was his responsibility and that of his Office for Micronesian Status Negotiations staff. They had been working with the Interior committees. Previously, they had been under an injunction from the White House to limit their consultations to the Interior committees. More recently, they had been seeing other members of Congress. Defense had also been working on the House side. Burton had said that he would take care of the Democrats and the Ambassador could work with the Republicans. The Ambassador said he had been hoping that final Congressional approval could be obtained by the end of July, but the debate on the Wyman/Durkin election had held things up. He noted that Senator Johnston would probably steer the Marianas Covenant through the Senate on behalf of Interior Committee Chairman Jackson.

The Ambassador mentioned in passing the referendum on future political status held throughout Micronesia on July 8, saying the results were not yet known though the turnout of voters appeared to have been light.

The Ambassador said he was sorry that we had not got such a good press on the Marianas Covenant. The New York Times had carried an editorial on June 29 which, among other things, had described the Covenant as military-motivated. He had written a letter to the editor of the Times, pointing out the many erroneous statements made in the editorial. The editor had telephoned him the day before and said that he would print the Ambassador's letter if it could be reduced to 400 words. The Ambassador went on to say that British Ambassador Murray, the Chairman of the UN Visiting Mission which observed the Marianas plebiscite and a good friend of his, had told him that his letter had caused quite a stir at the Times which saw it as an indictment. In sum, the Ambassador expected that we would probably not get a very good press from the New York Times and the Washington Post, which think that the Administration is presenting the Congress with a fait accompli and that we "have bought off the natives."

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The Ambassador concluded by saying that he had a couple of other matters which he wished to discuss with Mr. Ingersoll but would wait until another occasion.

Mr. Ingersoll told the Ambassador that he would telephone General Scowcroft right away.

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