October 23, 1975

Honorable Philip A. Hart United States Senate Washington, D. C. 20510

Dear Senator Hart:

Thank you for vour letter of September 15, requesting on behalf of information in response to questions she has raised concerning the future status of the Mariana Islands, a nuclear free Pacific and the Trident nuclear missile system.

The United States is the Administering Authority for the Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands, commonly referred to as Micronesia, under the terms of a Trusteeship Agreement concluded in 1947 between the United States and the United Nations. The Northern Mariana Islands make up one of the six districts of the Trust Territory. (The U.S. territory of Guam is geographically part of the Mariana Islands but is not a part of the Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands.) As Administering Authority, the United States agreed to "promote the development of the inhabitants of the trust territory toward self-government or independence, as may be appropriate to the particular circumstances of the trust territory and its peoples and the freely expressed wishes of the peoples concerned." The United States is a member of the United Nations Trusteeship Council, and we annually report to that body on progress and developments in the Trust Territory.

The Universeship Council has acknowledged the repeated requests from the Korthern Mariana Islands for a closer relationship with the United States. After two years of negotiations, a "Covenant to Establish a Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands in Political Union with the United States of America" was signed on Pebruary 15, 1975. The Covenant was presented to the people of the Northern Marianas in a plebiscite on June 17, 1975, which was observed by a Special Visiting Mission authorized and

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dispatched by the UN Trusteeship Council. The plabiscite resulted in a 78.8% vote in favor of the Covenant, with 95% of the registered voters participating. We regard this UN-observed act of self-determination as a major step in the fulfillment of our obligations as Administering Authority.

The Covenant is presently undergoing review by the United States Congress. On July 21 the House of Representatives gave its approval to the Covenant, in H.J. Res. 549, by voice vote without any objection, following unanimous approval by the House Interior and Insular Affairs Committee and its Subcommittee on Territorial Affairs. The Covenant is now before the Senate for its consideration and approval.

Further information concerning the proposed Northern Marianas Commonwealth and U.S. negotiations on the future political status of the other districts of the Trust Territory can be obtained from Ambassador F. Haydn Williams, the President's Personal Representatives for Micronesian Status Negotiations, and the Office for Micronesian Status Negotiations, Washington, D.C. 20240.

The U.S. considers that the establishment of effective nuclear weapon free zones in appropriate regions of the world could be a useful complement to the Non-Proliferation Treaty and other measures in preventing the spread of nuclear weapons. In assessing any specific regional arrangement we would take into account the extent to which that arrangement meets the following criteria:

- -- The nuclear free some should be sponsored by states in the area concerned;
- -- It should include all states whose participation is deemed important;
- -- It should not disturb necessary security arrangements;
- -- It so, aid provide adequately our verification of compliance.

In addition to these criteria, the U.S. believes that a nuclear weapon free zone should not permit its parties to develop an indigenous nuclear explosive capability for any purpose, peaceful or military, since in our view the development of such a capability would not be compatible with the objective of preventing the spread of nuclear weapons.

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As for the inclusion of the waters of the Pacific within such a zone; the U.S. could not accept the imposition of a special legal regime over any portion of the high seas or restrictions on transit and overflight.

As for your constituent's questions concerning the Trident submarine and missile system, this subject falls under the purview of the Department of Defense. I have therefore forwarded your communication to Mr. John M. Maury, Assistant Secretary of Defense for Legislative Affairs, Department of Defense, Washington, D.C. 20301, for further reply.

I hope you will call on me if you believe we can be of assistance.

Sincerely,

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Robert J. McCloskey Assistant Secretary for Congressional Relations

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