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DOD preparation
for Armed Services
Committee hearings

SCOPE PAPER

ON

THE NORTHERN MARIANAS COVENANT

1. The Covenant is a political document. Unlike procurement or military construction bills, we will not have another opportunity to go before the Senate Armed Services Committee next year. Failure to approve the Covenant will have a very serious impact on our relations with the people of the Northern Marianas and our negotiations with the remainder of Micronesia. It would indicate, most of all, a lack of long-term U.S. interest in the Pacific area.

2. Our assessment of prospective votes indicates that the Marianas Covenant is a "cliff-hanger" in the Senate Armed Services Committee. Ambassador Williams and Senator Stennis have indicated that a strong defense position, oriented toward the Southern Conservative vote, will be essential to its passage. At the same time, we must avoid any inference that defense issues alone drove the negotiations.

3. The Southern Conservatives are not keen about the political aspects of this agreement. — *no evidence of this other than Byrd's position and Jackson's observations*

- Some will see this Covenant as an undesirable precedent. They will infer that we are giving these people citizenship in order to support a forward defense and silently wonder about other islands of strategic importance, like Iceland or the Azores. They may establish a linkage with Vietnamese refugees and oppose what they see to be a growing influx of Asians into the American family. They will be concerned about the remainder of Micronesia--how we are going to respond to these people, if they ask for U.S. citizenship.

- Others will be opposed to the U.N. aspects. They did not like the U.N. Trusteeship to begin with, but now they see no reason to change it. They will stress that the Trusteeship Agreement provides all of the rights needed by DOD and that a new political status is not required to protect our national security interests.

- Senator Byrd strongly opposed the return of Okinawa to Japan and is still smarting from this decision. In his view, "if Okinawa was not important to our national security, what islands could be?" At the same time, he would have opposed any attempt to bring Okinawa into the American family (the issue never arose).

4. We will have to convince this group, in a rather subtle way, that the benefits of this agreement to our national security posture far outweigh the benefits they are about to bestow upon the 14,350 people of the Northern Marianas. It will be important also to establish a direct strategic and cultural linkage with Guam, which has been a U.S. territory since 1898.

- Try to avoid any philosophical discussion about democratic principles and self-determination. This could lead to a liberal diatribe against "undemocratic regimes" we support with our military presence in other areas.

- Ambassador Williams will speak on NSC matters, the U.N. aspects, political background, and conduct of the negotiations--why we did this or that. You will be asked to speak on the strategic importance of the Northern Marianas, defense interests, land requirements, and plans for Tinian. Feel free to convey any favorable impressions you received during your visit to the Northern Marianas in September 1974.

5. We can expect considerable interest in long-range foreign policy, national security, and domestic interests of the United States in the Pacific area. Our prepared statement takes a regional perspective, avoiding any discussion of particular countries. If the hearings turn toward a detailed discussion of our foreign relations with China, Japan, Korea, or the Philippines, we will have to defer to the State Department.

6. Assumptions concerning our military presence in foreign countries will be extremely important to this Committee. We have to make a strong case for the Northern Marianas, without implying that we are in deep trouble elsewhere in the Western Pacific or leaning toward a new mid-Pacific strategy. Stress that:

- We are trying to avoid extreme assumptions, i.e., that we can maintain the status quo indefinitely or that we will lose all of our base rights simultaneously. Highlight the complementary role of the Northern Marianas, requirements which cannot be met elsewhere, and the need for a hedge against unforeseen changes.

- We cannot think solely in terms of a military presence. We must think about the credibility of that presence. Almost anyone will accept U.S. troops who sit in a classroom all day, pay their rent, and spend money in town at night. We are more likely to run into problems when we start exercising them in a combat role. Land is needed, away from heavily populated areas, for the conduct of amphibious exercises, field maneuvers, ship-to-shore bombardment, and delivery of air-to-ground weapons. Land of this type is difficult to find.

7. Hostile witnesses, led by Senator Hart, are likely to assert that this agreement is based on an exaggerated and constantly changing assessment of the strategic importance of the Northern Marianas. Be wary of a study by Donald McHenry, conducted under the auspices of the Carnegie Endowment Fund. In part, his study is based on various interviews with unnamed Pentagon sources who presented personal rather than official views. Make it clear that the DOD position has been consistent, except on the Tinian base development plan.

8. The reasons for scaling down MILCON plans for Tinian were addressed by Secretary Schlesinger during hearings on the FY1976 Defense Appropriation by the House. It is important to acknowledge that we were concerned about our base posture during the period 1971-73 and, therefore, inclined toward early development. If the political situation should change, we would be taking another hard look at our defense posture in the Western Pacific and our base options in the Northern Marianas.

9. Usually we are very careful to inform appropriate Members of Congress in advance of any public announcement that DOD is buying land or building new facilities. Hence, some Senators may be offended by the second-hand information they received on our land requirements and base plans for Tinian (circa 1971-74). Stress the public aspects of the negotiations, the desire of the people of the Northern Marianas to know our requirements incident to these negotiations, and our reluctance to approach Congress for the necessary authorizations and appropriations until we knew what the agreement would provide.

10. Senator Hart could try to spearhead a movement to split out the authorization for defense land from political status aspects. Don't buy it. The land is an integral part of the negotiated agreement. We would have great difficulty with our defense requirements elsewhere in Micronesia, if we accepted this precedent.

11. Note that we still must obtain the appropriation to lease this land from Congress. The authorization will give us the option to proceed with the necessary appropriations. Tentatively, we plan to do this in FY1978.

12. We have included a copy of the Technical Agreement in your back-up book and answers to questions which might arise on this Agreement. We do not want Congress to act on the Technical Agreement. It merely consolidates a number of arrangements we have on Guam into a single document which will be applicable to the Northern Marianas. Guam may not be the best model, but it is the most visible one to the people living on Tinian.

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