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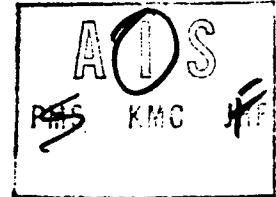
INTERNATIONAL
SECURITY AFFAIRS

ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF DEFENSE
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20301

DEP. SEC. HAS SEEN

8 DEC 1975

In reply refer to:
I-12637/75



MEMORANDUM FOR THE DEPUTY SECRETARY OF DEFENSE

SUBJECT: Marianas Covenant (U) - ACTION MEMORANDUM

(U) The impression around town is that Senators Jackson and Stennis are looking for more officials in the Department of Defense to speak out in favor of the Northern Marianas Covenant.

(U) During your luncheon on Thursday, 4 December 1975, with Senator Stennis and others, it would be helpful if you could spend a few minutes talking about the importance of a forward defense in the Pacific, the various political uncertainties we face as defense planners, and the benefits we see deriving from a firm position in the Marianas.

(U) We have to convince Senator Stennis that we have a substantial defense capability on Guam now and that the Marianas as a whole are going to become more rather than less important to us in the years ahead. We also must stress that our friends and allies in the Pacific Region are still looking for some strong signals that we are going to remain in the area over the long haul.

- Approval of the Covenant would convey that signal, without enlarging very much the commitment we already have to Guam.

- Disapproval of the Covenant would lead others to believe that we were either very foolhardy or extremely casual about the future defense of Guam, which is U.S. territory. The inferences drawn from this action could be extremely detrimental to our position and influence throughout the Pacific Region.

(U) I am attaching a talking paper and a letter I sent to Senator Byrd on this subject. Senator Stennis is more likely to be attentive to our long-range posture than our immediate requirement for additional training areas.

Attachments

Robert Ellsworth
Assistant Secretary of Defense
International Security Affairs

ASD/ISA

Classified by _____
SUBJECT TO GENERAL DECLASSIFICATION SCHEDULE
EXECUTIVE ORDER 11652. AUTOMATICALLY DOWNGRADED
AT TWO YEAR INTERVALS. DECLASSIFIED ON 31 Dec 81

Doc 113

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Sec Def Cont Nr. X-3562

10-431624

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TALKING PAPER

NORTHERN MARIANAS COVENANT

- Senate Armed Services Committee, along with Foreign Relations, has concurrent jurisdiction over H.J.R. 549, as amended by the Senate Interior Committee. This Joint Resolution would establish a Commonwealth of the Northern Marianas, in political union with the United States.
- Basic question asked by members of this Committee is: "Why is it necessary to bring these people into the American family in order to protect our defense interests?" Following points should be used in response:
 - First, we would like to stress the advantages of this Covenant in terms of long-range defense planning. As you know, we live with an enormous range of uncertainties--the international situation and what it will be 5 or 25 years from now, the future size and structure of our military forces, the foreign and defense policies of our friends and adversaries, and the various types of contingencies for which we must be prepared. From this perspective, there is one action which clearly would benefit our national security posture in the Western Pacific--stabilize our relationship with the Northern Marianas. This is what the Covenant does. By placing both the Northern Marianas and Guam under the American flag, it will strengthen our defense posture in this part of the Pacific, enable us to hedge against political uncertainties elsewhere in the Region, and plan the sort of support our forces may need under a wide range of contingencies involving our national security interests.
 - Second, we believe that it is important to establish a lasting relationship with the Northern Marianas to protect our political and military position on Guam, where we support SAC B-52's, POLARIS submarines, ships and aircraft of the Seventh Fleet, and worldwide communications. The denial of the Northern Marianas to the armed forces of any foreign nation is a primary consideration, but it is also important that we maintain the influence we currently have over such matters as the allocation of radio frequencies, the control of military air traffic, and the demarcation of territorial waters. The federal relationship which will be established with the Commonwealth of the Northern Marianas will protect these important defense interests.
 - Third, this Covenant, and the land we seek to lease in the Northern Marianas, will enable us to use our facilities on Guam to greater advantage. Guam is now and will remain for the foreseeable future a major operating base for U.S. forces. We do not have to build another naval station, ship repair facility, communications station, air traffic control center, or SAC base in the Northern Marianas, but we do need

additional acreage for training, logistic support, and other land intensive functions which are apt to become important in future years. The 18,000 acres on Tinian will enhance the future potential of Guam to support our forward deployments. This is not to suggest that we are going to lose our bases in Korea, Japan, and the Philippines. However, it would be extremely dangerous to assume that we are going to maintain our access to each and every one of these bases for the indefinite future, with the same rights we have today.

- Fourth, we do not see our relationship with the rest of Micronesia evolving along the same lines as this Covenant. In general, the people of the Carolinas and the Marshalls desire a looser form of association and the right to terminate this association after a period of 15 years. Thereafter, our defense relations would be covered by mutual security agreement of some unspecified period of time. In contrast, this Covenant reflects a desire by the people of the Northern Marianas to join the American family, to voluntarily place their islands under U.S. sovereignty, and to contribute to the "common defense" of the United States. Considering the very close proximity of the Northern Marianas to Guam--a U.S. territory since 1898, the home of 100,000 American citizens, and the site of extremely important U.S. defense installations--we believe that this Covenant will protect our national security interests better than any other arrangement could.
- In summary, we strongly support H.J.R. 549, as amended by the Senate Interior Committee, because it reflects the political status desired by the people of the Northern Marianas, it clearly supports our national security interests, and it provides land in the Marianas which we need for defense purposes now and in the years ahead. Moreover, the firm position we establish in the Marianas as a whole will strengthen our position as a Pacific Power, without involving any new commitments to any foreign nation.

Prepared by:
CAPT J. M. Elster, USN
OASD/ISA/EA&PR/TTPI
24 November 1975