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QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS CONCERNING
THE MARIANAS COVENANT

The Covenant is a political status agreement that provides for a close and permanent political relationship between the United States and what is now the Mariana Islands District ("Marianas") of the Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands ("Micronesia"). The status of the Marianas will be similar to that of Guam and Puerto Rico. The people of the Marianas will become American citizens, with the full rights and responsibilities of citizenship. They will be guaranteed the right of local self-government. The United States will have full authority with respect to foreign affairs and defense matters.

The Covenant was negotiated between freely-selected representatives of the people of the Marianas and a representative of the United States Government. The Covenant was unanimously approved by the locally-elected legislature in the Marianas, and was then endorsed by a 78 percent favorable vote in a United Nations-observed plebiscite in which over 90 percent of the eligible persons registered and voted. The Covenant was approved without dissent by the House in July, and has been reported favorably without dissent to the Senate by the Senate Interior Committee.

The following are the answers to the most common questions asked about the Covenant.

1. Are There Advantages to the United States From Approving the Covenant?

YES. First, the Covenant provides the foundation for an honorable conclusion to the United Nations' trusteeship under which the Marianas and the rest of Micronesia are presently governed. This is the only remaining U.N. trusteeship and the United States has been subject to criticism for failing to terminate it in accordance with the obligation it undertook in 1947. Prompt approval of the Covenant will demonstrate the commitment of the United States to conclude its trusteeship responsibilities for all of Micronesia in accordance with the desires of her peoples. Second, approval of the Covenant assures that the United States' interest in peace and security in the Western Pacific will be protected. It does this without extending any present United States commitments, for today the United States has defense responsibility for the Marianas as well as for Guam and the American citizens who live there. These commitments would not change if the Covenant were rejected.

2. Is the Covenant Consistent With International Law?

YES. Opponents of the Covenant have charged that it violates international law because it provides for a different political status for the Marianas than the other parts

of Micronesia. This charge is unsupportable. The people of the Marianas want to be American citizens in an American territory, like their cousins in the U.S. Territory of Guam, which is geographically but — due to an accident of history — not politically part of the Marianas. The people of the other parts of Micronesia want a political status that does not include U.S. citizenship or U.S. sovereignty. Separation is therefore unavoidable. The Trusteeship Agreement itself recognizes that the Trust Territory consists of a variety of "peoples," and not a single people in any meaningful sense. The leaders of the other parts of Micronesia testified before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee that they supported the Marianas people's right of self-determination, and endorsed the Covenant. Finally, other United Nations trusteeships were divided upon termination, so there can be no doubt as to the legality of the Covenant.

3. Is the Political Relationship Contained in the Covenant "Colonial" or in Violation of United Nations' Principles?

NO. The Trusteeship Agreement requires the United States to promote "self-government or independence as may be appropriate to the particular circumstances . . . and the freely expressed wishes" of the people of the Marianas. The circumstances of the Marianas make independence impossible; and the people's wishes were overwhelmingly expressed in favor of the Covenant in the U.N.-observed plebiscite. The Covenant guarantees the people of the Marianas the right of local self-government under their own constitution. The United Nations has declared Puerto Rico, whose relationship to the United States is similar, to be a self-governing entity. It would be "colonialism" of the worst sort for the United States to deny the people of the Marianas their right of self-determination by forcing them into an unwanted permanent political relationship with the other parts of Micronesia.

4. Should Congress Delay Action on the Covenant Until the Other Districts of Micronesia Determine Their Future Political Status?

NO. First, the Covenant is structured so that the people of the Marianas will, immediately after the Covenant is approved, have the right to govern themselves with respect to internal affairs. This would be unfairly denied to the people of the Marianas if approval is delayed. Second, if Congress fails to act on the Covenant the Trust Territory government as a whole would be left in a state of flux for an indefinite period. The people of the Marianas have made clear their desire to separate themselves from the remainder of Micronesia; the leaders of the remainder of Micronesia have endorsed that desire as a legitimate one. Accordingly, no one can expect the Trust Territory government or the Congress of Micronesia to work effectively on the problems of the Marianas or elsewhere until the separation has taken place. Third, there

is no possibility that the people of the Marianas will want a common political status with people in the rest of Micronesia. It is clear, and has been for some time, that the rest of Micronesia will seek a free association relationship with the United States, one which does not provide for American citizenship for the Micronesians, and one which is unilaterally terminable by either side. Thus there is no further information of any significance that will be available to Congress if approval of the Covenant is delayed.

5. Does the Covenant Commit the United States to Build a Military Base in the Marianas?

NO. The Covenant provides that the United States may, but is not required to, use certain land in the Marianas for military purposes. This provision was included so that the people of the Marianas, when they voted, would know the potential extent of U.S. land needs. There is no commitment on the part of the United States to build a base; indeed, the Defense Department has announced that it has scrapped its plans for a base there. No base could be built in any event without further authorizations and appropriations by Congress.

6. Will the Covenant Cost the U.S. Taxpayer Billions?

NO. The Covenant provides for economic assistance to the Marianas of \$14 million a year, roughly comparable to the Marianas share of anticipated U.S. grants to all of Micronesia for the years in question. In addition, the Marianas, like Guam and other territories, would be eligible to participate in federal programs. The goal of this direct and indirect assistance is the prompt and complete economic self-sufficiency of the Marianas.

7. Are the Marianas Different From Other Parts of the World That Might Want to Be Part of the United States?

YES. Because of the Trusteeship Agreement, the United States has a special relationship with, and special obligations to, the Marianas. There is no other area of the world that might seek a close and permanent association with the United States to which the United States has a similar obligation. And, in any event, the decision whether to accept a new member into the American political family is entirely up to the Congress, based on the best interests of the United States in each situation. Thus there can be no adverse precedent set by approving the Covenant.

Prepared by the Marianas Political
Status Commission