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The Chairman and Members
of the Senate Armed Services Committee
Washington, D.C. 20510

Gentlemen:

At the Armed Services Committee's hearing on November 17 concerning the Marianas' Covenant, the question arose whether United States defense interests could be protected if the Covenant were rejected or delayed, and the people of the Marianas, against their will, were forced into a different future political status. We are writing to explain why the Covenant provides the only way that the defense interests of the United States with respect to the Marianas -- whether they be denial of the Marianas to another power, the building of a base in the Marianas, or the use of land in the Marianas for training or storage -- can adequately be protected.

Commonwealth status for the Marianas under the Covenant guarantees the United States that it can protect its defense interests permanently, for the relationship could be terminated only if both the Marianas and the United States agreed. No other future political status alternative for the Marianas can provide this permanent protection of the United States defense interest. The status of free association inevitably contemplates an

15217

independent and sovereign Marianas that could not as a practical matter be bound permanently to deny its land to foreign powers or to permit the United States to build a base or store equipment or train troops. Indeed, one of the primary objections already voiced in the Congress to the proposed Compact of Free Association for the other districts of Micronesia has been that it provides inadequate protection for United States defense interests.

Furthermore, under the Covenant the people of the Marianas will be United States citizens -- they will owe allegiance to the United States and they will have a common stake with other U.S. citizens in protecting the national security interests of this country. Under any other political status being proposed, the people of the Marianas would be foreigners to the United States. Experience plainly shows that United States defense policies are best protected when carried out in areas that are under the American flag. For these reasons, it seems clear to us that American defense interests in this part of the western Pacific cannot be as well protected under alternative political status arrangements for the Marianas as under the Covenant.

Finally, only by approving the Covenant can the United States conclude the Trusteeship in a way that fully respects the right of self-determination of the people of the Marianas, and discharges the responsibilities the United

States undertook in 1947 when it entered into the Trusteeship Agreement. The people of the Marianas have, by an overwhelming vote in the United Nations-observed plebiscite, exercised their right of self-determination by requesting self-government as a part of the American political family. This decision was made after an extensive study of the political status alternatives; it reflects the long-held desires of the people of the Marianas as expressed in the elected district legislature, in petitions to the U.S. Congress, and in appearances before the United Nations. There is no reason to believe that any other political status arrangement would be acceptable to the people of the Marianas. In the absence of agreement between the people of the Marianas and the United States on a future political status, the United States will have no assurances that its defense interests can be adequately protected. For if the Covenant is rejected, whether directly or in the guise of indefinite deferral, it is difficult to see why the people of the Marianas, forced into a political status they do not want, would make substantial concessions to the United States with respect to use of ^{their} ~~her~~ scarce land by the United States ^{for its} defense purposes. Thus, not only does the Covenant provide the only adequate protection for the United States defense interests, the Covenant may well be the only way to protect those interests in the Marianas.

Very truly yours,

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for
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15219