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December 2, 1975

MEMORANDUM FOR HOWARD WILLENS

Subject: The Marianas

Ambassador Williams sent over to us copies of Senator Percy's "Dear Colleague" letter of November 20. In Williams' view this letter makes it clear that the Percy amendment does not contemplate present approval of the Covenant, but rather means that another vote by Congress would be necessary after the other districts come to some agreement with the executive branch. I am not sure he is right.

Williams wants our thoughts on the position the executive branch ought to take. He has called a meeting of the Interagency Group for later this week to discuss this matter and wants our input before that. He would also like to discuss what action would be appropriate on the part of the people of the Marianas to urge Senator Percy to change his views.

Michael S. Helfer

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Per Amb. Williams
Dec. 2, 75
United States Senate

COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN RELATIONS
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20510

November 20, 1975

Dear Colleague:

I am writing to request your support for an amendment to H.J. Res. 549, a joint resolution to approve a Commonwealth Covenant for the Northern Marianas.

The purpose of this amendment (a copy of which is attached) is to defer approval of the Marianas Covenant until the Administration submits to Congress an agreement or agreements covering the future political status of the whole Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands (known as Micronesia). This will enable Congress to evaluate the whole package at one time. It would also permit the Northern Marianas people to opt for union with the rest of Micronesia or for reunification with Guam if they decided, in the interim, that either of these alternatives appealed to them. From the standpoint of U.S. interests, I believe that either of these latter arrangements would be preferable to creating a separate U.S. Commonwealth in the far Western Pacific for the 14,000 Northern Marianas people.

The United States has undertaken a responsibility to prepare its Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands for self-government. The basic U.S. defense interest in this vast region is to have access to and through the area in time of U.S. defense emergency and to prevent other powers from establishing military bases there. I believe that these responsibilities and interests can best be reconciled by concluding an agreement (or agreements) with the representatives of the Micronesian people covering their future political status -- one that will pave the way for friendly and mutually beneficial U.S.-Micronesian relations after our Trust agreement is terminated.

The Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands consists of three Island groups: the Northern Marianas (population 14,000) and the Marshalls and Carolines (with a combined population of 100,000). In a June 1975 plebiscite, the people of the Northern Marianas clearly indicated their support of the "Marianas Covenant," which would grant them Commonwealth status, U.S. citizenship, and generous financial benefits in return for a U.S. right to convert two-thirds of Tinian Island into an American military base.

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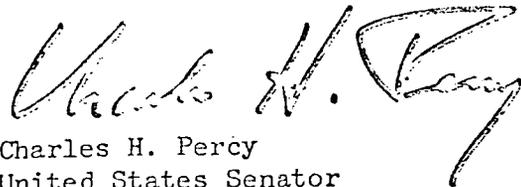
The Defense Department indicates it has suspended earlier plans to build a major base there and now wants the land mainly for peacetime maneuvers, storage facilities, and various other military contingencies.

In 1974, the U.S. Government and representatives of the Congress of Micronesia reached tentative agreement on a Compact of Free Association. Under this arrangement, an independent, self-governing Micronesia would have the right to withdraw unilaterally from its association with the United States. Further action on this Compact has been delayed, in part, by the Marianas Covenant plebiscite (last June) and by the Micronesian Constitutional Convention, which has just completed its work. I have been told that the financial terms under which free association would take place is one of the main issues still to be ironed out between the United States and Congress of Micronesia representatives. I have also been told that agreement on a free association compact might be achieved in a year or two and possibly even sooner. Hence, the delay in approval of the Marianas Covenant, which I propose in this amendment, is not necessarily of long duration.

It has sometimes been suggested that the Secretary of Interior lacks the authority to grant the Northern Marianas a separate administration from the rest of Micronesia until Congress approves the Marianas Covenant. However, I have been informed by the Department of Interior Office of Territorial Affairs that the Secretary can proceed without further Congressional action. In any case, a sentence in this amendment makes clear that "Nothing in this joint resolution is intended by Congress to prevent or delay the institution of separate administration for the Northern Marianas..." It is my understanding that representatives of the Northern Marianas and of the Congress of Micronesia are currently negotiating the terms of separate administration for the Marianas and that they expect the results of their negotiations to be embodied in an order by the Secretary of Interior.

If you would like to join in co-sponsoring this amendment, please contact Peter A. Poole (x47917) in my office.

Sincerely yours,



Charles H. Percy
United States Senator

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Referred to the Committee on _____ and ordered to be printed.

Ordered to lie on the table and to be printed.

AMENDMENT'S

Intended to be proposed by Mr. PERCY _____
(Insert title of bill below)

~~XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX~~

~~XXXX~~ H. J. RES. 549, ~~and~~ joint resolution to approve the "Covenant To Establish a Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands in Political Union with the United States of America", and for other purposes,

~~viz: On page xxx, line xxx, insert the following:~~

viz: On page 2, line 3, immediately after "That", insert the following: "(a) subject to the provisions of subsection (b) of this section,".

On page 2, after line 6, add the following:

(b) The approval provided for under subsection (a) of this section shall take effect upon the date of the approval by Congress of an agreement or agreements between the United States and representatives of the people of the Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands covering the future political status of the entire Trust Territory in a form that is consistent with United States international responsibilities and national interest. Nothing in this joint resolution is intended by Congress to prevent or delay the institution of separate administration for the Northern Marianas or further progress toward self-government by any or all portions of the Trust Territory. Nothing in this joint resolution is intended by Congress to prevent or discourage the people of the Northern Marianas from achieving self-determination either in union with the territory of Guam or with the people of the Marshall and Caroline Islands.