

SEP 28 1977

Memorandum

To: The Secretary
Through: The Under Secretary

From: Ruth G. Van Cleave

Subject: White House Ceremony concerning the Northern Marianas
Constitution

Would you undertake to arrange a ceremony at the White House, involving the President, on or soon after October 22, in connection with the President's signing of the proclamation that will state the Northern Marianas Constitution is approved?

A Presidential Proclamation either has been or soon will be sent by the Department of Justice to the White House on this subject. We understand that the Proclamation, accompanied by a recommendation that it be signed by the President either on October 22 or as soon thereafter as possible, will state that the Constitution of the Northern Marianas meets the tests prescribed by the Northern Marianas Covenant, enacted by the Congress in March of 1976 (P.L. 94-241); that it is now deemed approved, 6 months having passed since it was transmitted by the Secretary of the Interior to the President; and that it will become effective on January 9, 1978 — the foreseen inauguration day of the popularly elected Governor of the Northern Marianas.

There have been requests for many months for a White House ceremony in connection with the President's signing of the Proclamation on this subject. Most recently, Resident Commissioner Canham repeated the request, noting a special convenience arising from the fact that several Northern Marianas political leaders will be in Alabama on October 15 for a ship launching (the ship carrying the name "Saipan"), and they could move on to Washington at relatively little further expense.

I strongly recommend that a ceremony be arranged. The United States has not acquired new territory (which, as a practical matter, is what is involved here, although the action will not be completed until the unknown future date when the Trusteeship Agreement is terminated) since 1917,

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when the Virgin Islands were purchased from Denmark. The enthusiasm of the people of the Northern Marianas for their new association with the United States is enormous, and quite worthy, I suggest, of the President's personal acknowledgment.

I believe that 30 minutes would be ample for this purpose. The date may present a problem, for October 22 is a Saturday, and the following Monday is Veteran's Day. Unquestionably the Northern Marianas representatives would be glad to attend on either of those days, but the President's own plans might foreclose a ceremony then. In any event, the best date is the one closest to (but not before) October 22, because there is much to be done in the Northern Marianas in connection with the upcoming elections and the creation of a new government, to be in place by January 9, 1978.

If you are able to arrange a ceremony, it would be helpful to the planners in my office if you could obtain a number from the White House as to a ceiling on invitees. As we see it now, the invitees should minimally include six to eight from the Northern Marianas; about half a dozen from the Congress, who were involved in the passage of the Covenant; and about half a dozen more from the Executive branch and the Washington scene, such number to include a very small number from this Department. If that total of approximately 20 could be expanded, we would be pleased and we could easily fill the additional slots. (We would do this only after conferring with you, for we recognize that invitations to White House ceremonies carry heavy implications.)

We hope you will try to arrange this ceremony. I think we owe it to the Northern Marianas.

MRS. RUTH G. VAN CLEVE

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