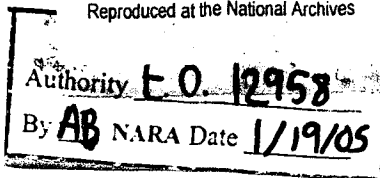


MEMORANDUM

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THE WHITE HOUSE  
WASHINGTON



ACTION

March 6, 1969

SECRET

MEMORANDUM FOR THE PRESIDENT

FROM : Henry A. Kissinger *HK*

SUBJECT: Trust Territory Pacific Islands

Since 1947, the U.S. has administered the Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands, which consists of some 2,100 islands scattered over the Western Pacific, under a United Nations trusteeship agreement. During this period, very little has been done to assure permanent U.S. control over this territory, despite its accepted strategic importance to the United States. There is now a need for urgent action. The reasons for the current situation and recommendations for action are set forth below.

Background

1. Strategic interest: Continued U.S. administration of the Trust Territory is essential to assure U.S. control over the Central and Western Pacific and, at a minimum, to deny the islands to possible hostile forces. In addition, the Trust Territory now provides major military facilities for weapons research and development [REDACTED] and other military activities. Further development of new military facilities is contingent in part, however, on assurance of continued U.S. control over the Trust Territory.

2. Status of the Trust Territory: Under the terms of the UN trusteeship agreement, the U.S. is committed to preparation of the local people for self-government or independence according to their freely expressed wishes. In effect, under the

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present UN ground rules, a plebiscite would be required to determine the views of the Trust Territory population, and they could choose independence. The alternative is to maintain the trusteeship agreement indefinitely, which we could do through exercise, if necessary, of our UN Security Council veto. However, this would risk considerable heat both from the UN and the Micronesian population on the islands.

To prepare the way for a plebiscite, President Johnson in 1967 submitted legislation to Congress to establish a joint Presidential-Congressional status commission. The Senate passed the legislation but the House balked, largely due to the opposition of Congressman Aspinall, Chairman of the House Interior Committee. He objected to extending to the Trust Territory the necessary degree of self-government and apparently preferred an arrangement which by-passed sufficient consultation with the Micronesians or the UN. The main options open are to renew the proposal for a joint commission, establish a status commission without Congressional participation, or develop status proposals informally through consultations with Congress. The crucial factor is deciding on how to determine the arrangement most likely to assure a plebiscite vote favorable to permanent association with the U.S.

3. Administration of the area: The major consideration in influencing a favorable Micronesian vote will be the quality of our administration of the territory. A good deal of lip-service has been given to the need for improving our administration. However, despite some improvement in recent years, it is still unsatisfactory with the Micronesians increasingly resentful of a standard of living which may well be below that which they enjoyed under Japanese rule. As a consequence of this inadequate administration and U.S. failure to move ahead on a status commission, the Micronesians are no longer waiting for the U.S. to act. They are developing their own plans for future status which include serious consideration of cutting ties with the U.S.

#### Actions Required

What needs to be done now is:

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1. Reaffirmation of our strategic requirements for the Trust Territory.
2. Formulation of an action plan to assure permanent U.S. control over the territory, including a decision on a status commission.
3. Development of an action plan for immediate and longer term improvement in the quality of U.S. administration.

NSAM 145 issued on April 18, 1962 directed these actions, but obviously there was no carry-through. As a result, there is now an urgent need for decisive leadership and action on the Trust Territory. The NSC offers the most appropriate machinery for your consideration of policies designed to gain our objective of permanent control over the Trust Territory. I suggest setting up a special NSC task force to review Trust Territory policy under a tight deadline. Since the three Departments primarily concerned with the Trust Territory, State, Defense and Interior, each have a primary interest in separate aspects of the problem but have often in the past worked at cross purposes with one another, I am suggesting in this instance that a representative of my staff chair the working group.

## RECOMMENDATION:

That you approve the attached NSSM directing a review of the Trust Territory policy.

Approve *RW*

Other \_\_\_\_\_

Attachment:

NSSM on Trust Territory

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