

OFFICE FOR MICRONESIAN STATUS NEGOTIATIONS
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20240

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May 16, 1975

Action Memorandum

To : W. R. Smyser, Senior Staff Member, National Security Council

From : *F.W.S.* *F.W.S.* Haydn Williams, The President's Personal Representative for Micronesian Status Negotiations

Subject : Appointment for Marianas Leadership to see Vice President Rockefeller during the week of May 19-23, 1975

Action Recommended

That the Vice President meet with President Vicente N. Santos of the Marianas District Legislature and Senator Olympio T. Borja, the senior Senator in the Congress of Micronesia from the Mariana Islands District of the Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands. Senator Borja is a former member and President Santos is a member of the Marianas Political Status Commission, which recently signed the "Covenant to Establish a Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands in Political Union with the United States of America."

Discussion:

Senator Borja has been a leader in the Marianas movement towards Commonwealth. He is the senior Senator from the Mariana Islands District, having been elected to the first Congress in 1965 and reelected since then. Borja was born in 1930 and attended the University of Sydney, Australia and the Blackstone School of Law in the United States. He is a member of the Popular Party in the Mariana Islands which lost the most recent election. He was not up for reelection last year. Senator Borja is in Washington to petition the U.S. Congress for additional assistance to the people of Rongelap and Utirik Atolls in the Marshall Islands, who suffered radiation poisoning in 1957.

President Santos has been a member and President of the Marianas District Legislature since the first legislature convened in 1963. He has been influential in the Popular Party and in the conduct of the negotiations leading to Commonwealth. In this regard, he is the Vice-Chairman of the Marianas Political Status Commission. President Santos is in Washington en route to the United Nations Trusteeship Council meeting in New York.

It would be most appropriate and helpful to United States interests for the Vice President to see President Santos and Senator Borja during their visit to the United States. The Marianas have been asking for

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the last 20 years to become part of the United States. The new Covenant, if approved by the people of the Marianas in the plebiscite scheduled for this June 17 and by the United States Congress, will bring the Northern Marianas under United States sovereignty, constituting the first addition to American territory since the Virgin Islands were acquired in 1917. It will also be the first time that a people under a United Nations Trusteeship have asked to merge with the Administering power.

There is already some opposition to the proposed arrangement within the Marianas, the rest of Micronesia, the United Nations and the United States. Despite widespread popularity of the Commonwealth idea among the people of the Marianas, the results of the plebiscite cannot be taken for granted. While the United States should not appear to be conducting a hard-sell of commonwealth status for the Marianas, the publicity likely to be given in the Marianas to reception by the Vice President of President Santos and Senator Borja would give the Commonwealth Covenant a welcome boost. It is moreover both normal and fitting for the Vice President to make a public gesture of acknowledgement and welcome to those senior members of the Senate of Micronesia who are acknowledged popular leaders.

If a short time (5 - 10 minutes) could be found in the Vice President's schedule, a brief picture-taking session could be arranged. It would be fitting if the principal U.S. negotiator, Ambassador F. Haydn Williams, the President's Personal Representative could also be present.