

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

Old Executive Office Building  
Room 373  
Washington, D.C. 20506

December 10, 1975

The President  
The White House  
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear Mr. President:

Since my last report to you on June 17, 1975 there have been some important developments which bear on the future political status of the Northern Marianas and on the remaining districts of the Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands.

The Covenant to Establish the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands in Political Union with the United States of America which you forwarded on July 1, 1975, to the Congress with your request for early favorable action was approved by the House on July 21, without a dissenting vote. Since that time the matter has been before the Senate. The Interior Committee approved the measure on October 22, 1975. It was then referred jointly to the Senate Foreign Relations Committee and to Armed Services. Extensive hearings by these Committees have been completed. The deadline for their final action, originally set for December 3, has now been extended by unanimous consent to January 27, 1976. At that time a joint committee report and recommendation on the Covenant will be filed with the Senate along with the report of the Interior Committee.

Opposition to the Marianas Commonwealth Covenant has heretofore been limited to a very few Senators (Byrd of Virginia, Pell, and Hart of Colorado), but the number is growing. Senator Charles Percy has now taken the lead in calling for deferral of approval of the Administration's bill until the future political status of the remainder of the Territory is determined, and it would appear that Senator Percy prefers that the Covenant not be approved.

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Members of the three committees concerned (Interior, Foreign Relations and Armed Services) and their staffs now believe that passage of the Covenant is in jeopardy and that in the absence of strong support from the Administration, the legislation is very likely to be defeated.

The negotiations with the remainder of the Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands have been in abeyance during the past year. The October 1974 ad referendum agreement on a Compact of Free Association has neither been accepted nor rejected by the Congress of Micronesia; the only formal action by the Congress was a call for renegotiation of the financial provisions of the Compact. Further negotiations were, however, put aside by the Micronesians while they awaited the results respectively of the Law of the Sea meeting in Geneva, a territory-wide informal status referendum and the Micronesian Constitutional Convention. With these events now behind them, the Joint Committee on Future Status is calling for an informal meeting preparatory to a resumption of formal negotiations sometime in the spring of next year.

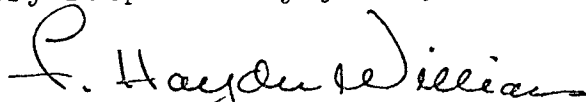
The draft Micronesian Constitution appears to conflict in a number of fundamental respects with the draft Compact of Free Association and my current instructions. In view of this and other related developments, including the Micronesian position on Law of the Sea, I recommend that a full U.S. policy review be undertaken for the purpose of updating the National Security Council, Under Secretaries Committee Micronesian policy paper of November 14, 1973. I believe this review should reconsider United States basic objectives in Micronesia in the context of larger American interests and the Pacific Doctrine which you enunciated during your recent trip to Asia and the Pacific. I recommend that this reassessment be undertaken immediately by the NSC-USC Interagency Group for Micronesia and that an updated policy paper with recommendations be submitted to the NSC-USC by March 1, 1976 for its consideration and subsequent transmittal to you. In the meantime, informal efforts will be made to draw out the Joint Committee on Future Status on a number of important issues relevant to the United States policy reassessment.

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Finally, I respectfully request your assistance in attaining the Senate's early approval of the Northern Mariana Islands Commonwealth Covenant. Failure of this legislation could have a very serious effect not only on future United States-Marianas relations but also on the prospects for attaining minimum U.S. objectives in the status negotiations with the Micronesians and therefore on the position and strength of the United States in the Pacific Ocean area.

Very respectfully yours,



Ambassador F. Haydn Williams  
The President's Personal Representative  
for Micronesian Status Negotiations

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