

NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL

URGENT ACTION

January 14, 1976

MEMORANDUM FOR: BRENT SCOWCROFT

FROM: TOM BARNES
LES JANKA

SUBJECT: Presidential Letters in Support of the
Northern Marianas Covenant



We understand that the Senate Foreign Relations Committee has scheduled mark-up of the resolution to approve the Northern Marianas Covenant for Tuesday, January 20. There are also indications that the Senate Armed Services Committee will take up the legislation either Tuesday, January 20, or Wednesday, January 21.

In your December 11 meeting with Ambassador Haydn Williams, you agreed to recommend Presidential involvement in the effort to overcome opposition to the Covenant in these two key committees. In addition, you indicated you would request Secretary Rumsfeld to try to influence Senator Percy who intends to propose a delay in the Covenant's approval until negotiations with the remaining Micronesian territories are completed. You also agreed to suggest to Secretary Kissinger that he try to turn Senator Javits around on this issue.

In view of pending committee action, attached at Tab A are proposed letters for the President's signature to the Chairmen and ranking minority members of the Foreign Relations and Armed Services Committees. At Tab B are suggested talking points for use in your conversations with Secretaries Kissinger and Rumsfeld. Other briefing material giving full argumentation is at Tab C. The proposed letters have been cleared by Paul Theis' office.

RECOMMENDATION

- That you sign the memorandum at Tab I to the President recommending that he sign the letters to Chairmen Stennis and Sparkman as well as Senators Thurmond and Case.

APPROVE _____

DISAPPROVE _____

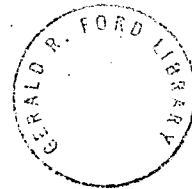
- That you telephone Secretary Rumsfeld requesting him to try to influence Senator Percy, who has proposed an amendment that would delay Congressional approval of the Covenant.

APPROVE _____ DISAPPROVE _____

- That you contact Secretary Kissinger requesting him to contact Senator Javits on this issue.

APPROVE _____ DISAPPROVE _____

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THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

MEMORANDUM FOR: THE PRESIDENT

FROM: BRENT SCOWCROFT

SUBJECT: Presidential Letters in Support of the
Northern Marianas Covenant

Having obtained approval of the full House on July 1, 1975 and the Senate Interior Committee on October 22, 1975, the resolution to approve the Covenant to establish the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands in Political Union with the United States has run into opposition in the Senate Foreign Relations and Armed Services Committees. Opposition has come from liberals, such as Senator Hart, who believe the act is an exercise in imperialism; and conservatives, such as Senator Byrd, who oppose taking up the burden of an alien and distant people. There are also those such as Senator Percy who, while they do not oppose the Covenant as such, believe we should delay approval until we complete negotiations with the remaining districts of Micronesia.

The Senate Foreign Relations Committee is scheduled to take up the legislation next Tuesday, January 20, and there are indications the Armed Services Committee will consider it either Tuesday, January 20, or Wednesday, January 21. We believe a personal letter from you to the Chairman and ranking minority member of each of the two committees could make the key contribution to our effort to overcome opposition in these two committees.

Attached at Tab A are proposed letters for your signature to Chairmen Stennis and Sparkman as well as to Senators Thurmond and Case. The letters explain the need for early approval of the Covenant and urge their support.

The proposed letters have been cleared by Paul Theis' office.

RECOMMENDATION

That you sign the letters at Tab A.



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THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

Dear Mr. Chairman:

I am writing to urge you to support the early approval of HJR 549, as amended -- a joint resolution which I transmitted to the Congress last July to approve the "Covenant to Establish a Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands in Political Union with the United States of America." The House has already approved this legislation and the Senate Interior Affairs Committee reported it out favorably last October.

Approval by the Senate of the Marianas Covenant, which was negotiated over a period of more than two years in close consultation with members of the Congress, will be a major step toward the fulfillment of our international Trusteeship obligations. It is consistent with the national interests and foreign policy of the United States.

I attach particular importance to the fulfillment of our pledge to give the peoples of the Northern Mariana Islands and the rest of the Trust Territory the right to choose freely their own political future. The people in the Northern Mariana Islands have spoken overwhelmingly in favor of union with the United States in a plebiscite observed by the United Nations last June. I feel we should demonstrate U.S. respect for the due process of self-determination by granting the island inhabitants their wish. Approval by your Committee and the full Senate of HJR 549, as amended, will permit them to move forward without delay toward full self-government as the Covenant provides.

Approval of the Covenant will also be taken as a sign of good faith on the part of the United States in other parts of Micronesia. The Congress of Micronesia representing all the districts has supported Congressional approval of the Covenant. It would serve no purpose to delay acting on the freely expressed wishes of the people of the Northern Marianas while we work to resolve the future status of the rest of Micronesia, again on the basis of self-determination.

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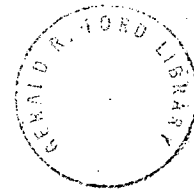


Since a defeat or an indefinite delay could indeed adversely affect the long term interests of all parties concerned, I hope the Senate Foreign Relations Committee will take early action to report favorably HJR 549, as amended, with a recommendation for its speedy approval by the full Senate.

For your information, I am enclosing two fact sheets on the Marianas Covenant. Your support for this important legislation is needed and will be appreciated.

Sincerely,

Honorable John Sparkman
Chairman, Senate Foreign Relations Committee
United States Senate
Washington, D. C. 20510



NEED FOR EARLY APPROVAL

The Covenant to establish a Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands in political union with the United States of America (H.J.R. 549, as amended) should be approved without delay. Prompt action will:

- be an important step toward fulfilling a U.S. international obligation by honoring the principle of self-determination
- promote the cause of peace and stability in the Western Pacific by assuring that those strategically located islands will not again become the object of international rivalry and armed hostility
- strengthen U.S. security interests in the Pacific and the defense of the vital military facilities located on nearby Guam
- provide a structure for the building of the institutions of self-government long desired by the people with funds already authorized by the Senate pending approval of the Covenant
- act as an incentive to the other parts of the Trust Territory to move ahead with decisions on their future political status
- forestall the administrative confusion and political uncertainties and tension which would be the result of delayed action
- demonstrate U.S. respect for the due process of self-determination and the overwhelming wishes of the people as expressed in a U.N.-observed plebiscite.

Failure on the part of the Senate to approve the Covenant would:

- undermine confidence in the American sense of purpose in the Pacific and throughout the Trust Territory
- create uncertainty as to the political future of the Northern Marianas and thereby tension and deep frustration
- contribute to a potentially unstable political situation and possible conflict between the Northern Marianas and the rest of the Trust Territory by denying both parties their desire to go their separate ways
- raise serious questions as to U.S. credibility and make the future negotiating environment for the termination of the U.S. trusteeship over the Pacific Islands much more strained and difficult
- undermine confidence in the U.S. and raise doubts as to whether agreements can be reached even when they have been worked out over a period of years with the full blessing and advice of those Committees of the Congress charged with legislative responsibility for the Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands.



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The Northern Marianas Commonwealth Covenant should be approved without delay. The Covenant will serve the national interest in many ways. It helps fulfill an international obligation assumed by the U.S. and it honors the principle of self-determination. It strengthens U.S. security interests in the Western Pacific and the defense of nearby Guam without expanding the international commitment of the U.S. It has been approved by the Marianas Legislature and by an overwhelming majority of the people in a U.N. observed plebiscite. Its passage by the Senate is supported by the Congress of Micronesia and the Guam Legislature. In July 1975 the President urged early Congressional action. In response the House approved the Covenant and the Senate Interior Committee reported the bill out favorable last October.

The question of the future political status of the islands of the Pacific has been pending for years and has been the subject of close consultation between the Congress and the Executive Branch since 1969. Negotiations leading to Commonwealth for the Northern Marianas were entered into only after consultation with the Congress. The talks were in response to the long-expressed desires of the people of the Northern Marianas for political union with the U.S. going back to the end of World War II. The final draft Covenant was submitted to the Interior Committee for review prior to its signature in February of last year.

Reasons for Early Approval:

- Approval now will be an important step in bringing the Trusteeship over these islands to an early and honorable end in accordance with the U.N. Charter and Trusteeship Agreement.

- Early approval will enable the Northern Marianas to move ahead in cooperation with the COM with a smooth and orderly separation which both parties desire. The COM has made it clear to the Senate that it honors the popular will of the people of the Northern Marianas and supports early Senate approval of the Covenant.

- Approval will clear the way for the appropriation of funds for self-government in the Northern Marianas which the Senate has already authorized pending final resolution of the Covenant.

- Approval will strengthen the chances of reaching a mutually satisfactory agreement with the other islands of the Trust Territory by resolving the uncertainty of the future status of the Northern Marianas.

- Finally since the Covenant has been negotiated in good faith and since the people of the Northern Marianas feel so strongly about being reunited with Guam under common U.S. citizenship, early approval of the Covenant by the Senate will be seen as a fulfillment of a moral commitment and increase the confidence and credibility of the U.S. in the Northern Marianas and throughout the Trust Territory.

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Consequences of Delay or Deferral by the Senate:

- Deferral or Defeat of H.J.R. 549, as amended, could create serious problems in the Northern Marianas and damage U.S. credibility in the remainder of the Trust Territory and in Guam.

- Deferral or Defeat would be a great psychological letdown for the people. While they entered into the negotiations with the full knowledge that Congressional approval would be required, they have nevertheless been encouraged over the years by the strong expressions of support from members of the Congress and from visiting Congressional delegations for their aspirations to become a territory of the U.S. like their sister island Guam with whom they have close family, religious and historical ties.

- Deferral or Defeat will undermine and seriously weaken the pro-American political leadership in the Northern Marianas which has joined in a common cause to bring their islands under the American flag. It would at the same time encourage and strengthen the very small but highly vocal and critical anti-American minority which opposes union with the U.S.

- Deferral or Defeat could undo the progress that has been made between the COM and the Northern Marianas in reaching agreement for an orderly separation, and could forestall planning for the relocation of the capital of Micronesia.

- Deferral or Defeat would deny the people of the Northern Marianas the right to move forward toward self-government under the terms of the Covenant which were carefully negotiated with the advice and advance approval of the Interior Committees of the U.S. Congress since those provisions dealing with the drafting of their own Constitution become effective only upon the approval of the Covenant by the U.S. Congress.

- Deferral or Defeat will greatly complicate and lessen the chances for a satisfactory conclusion of the negotiations with the COM. Delay will not change the fundamental political fact that the political aspirations of the Northern Marianas are for union with the U.S. while the rest of the Trust Territory is seeking an increasingly distant and temporary future association with the U.S. To ignore the fact that nearly 80% of the people of the Northern Marianas have already voted for Commonwealth and to then force them to continue to participate in the political process of the other districts would be awkward, disruptive and detrimental to the interest of all parties concerned.

- In summary, rejection of the Covenant by the Senate after approval by the House and after years of close consultation between the Northern Marianas and the Executive Branch and the U.S. Congress, or a decision by the Senate to postpone indefinitely the effective date of approval would seriously undermine confidence in the American sense of purpose in the Pacific, promote needless uncertainty and frustration in the Northern Marianas and create a much more complicated and difficult negotiating environment for the U.S. in its efforts to conclude a satisfactory agreement with the rest of the Trust Territory. An indefinite delay might indeed adversely affect the long-term interests of all parties concerned for no useful purpose.



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