

THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

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ADD/ON 1662

March 18, 1976

MEMORANDUM FOR:

✓ GENERAL BRENT SCOWCROFT
MAX FRIEDERSDORF

FROM:

WILLIAM W. NICHOLSON *WWN*

SUBJECT:

Approved Presidential Activity

Please take the necessary steps to implement the following and confirm with Mrs. Nell Yates, ext. 2699. The appropriate briefing paper should be submitted to Dr. David Hoopes by 4:00 p.m. of the preceding day.

Meeting: Signing Ceremony for H.J.Res. 549 - The Marianas Covenant

Date: Wed., March 24, '76 Time: 3:00 p.m. Duration: 15 mins.

Location: The East Room

Press Coverage:

Purpose:

- cc: Mr. Cheney
- Mr. Hartmann
- Mr. Marsh
- Dr. Connor
- Dr. Hoopes
- Mr. Nessen
- Mr. Jones
- Mr. Smith
- Mr. O'Donnell
- Mrs. Yates
- Mrs. Davis
- Mr. Wolthuis

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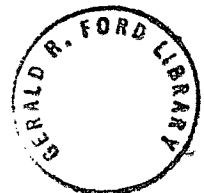
MAR 24 1976
CENTRAL FILES

Draft Press Release

The President today signed legislation approving a Covenant to Establish a Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands in Political Union with the United States of America. Ambassador F. Haydn Williams and representatives of the Northern Mariana Islands negotiated the Covenant over a period of more than two years beginning in December 1972. The people of the islands approved the Covenant in a plebiscite on June 17, 1975. The United States has kept the United Nations fully informed of developments in the Trust Territory including the negotiations leading to the Covenant, and representatives of the United Nations observed the plebiscite. The United States has governed the Northern Marianas since 1944 and has administered the islands since 1947 under the terms of a Trusteeship Agreement entered into with the United Nations Security Council for administration of the Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands.

The Covenant provides for local self-government. It extends, effective upon termination of the Trusteeship, probably in 1980-1981, U. S. sovereignty and full rights of United States citizenship to the some 14,000 people of the Northern Marianas. Approval of the agreement constitutes a major step toward fulfillment of the United States obligation under the Trusteeship Agreement to promote self-government or independence, in accordance with local conditions and the wishes of the peoples concerned.

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The Mariana Islands are located in the Western Pacific and consist of the Northern Marianas and Guam, which has been a United States territory since 1898. Since 1950 the people and leaders of the Northern Marianas have petitioned the United States for a status similar to that the Covenant now provides. The next step in movement toward self-government in the Northern Mariana Islands will be the issuance of an order by the Secretary of the Interior separating the Northern Marianas from the Marshall Islands and the Caroline Islands, which the United States also administers under the Trusteeship Agreement. The people of the Northern Marianas will then convene a convention to draft a local constitution in keeping with the Covenant and the applicable provisions of the United States Constitution. Following approval of the Northern Marianas Constitution, the people will elect a governor and legislature, and will install a constitutional government in the Northern Marianas.

The future political status of the other parts of the Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands, the Caroline and Marshall Islands, has not as yet been determined. Since 1969 the United States has been negotiating with representatives of the Trust Territory-wide legislature, the Congress of Micronesia, in an attempt to reach agreement on a new political relationship to follow termination of the Trusteeship. A Constitution completed last November outlines a general framework for a future government, but it remains to be tested in a referendum.



The United States Government hopes that the Marshalls and the Carolines will find a common solution for their future political status.

The United States has informed the United Nations Trusteeship Council that it intends to terminate the Trusteeship simultaneously for the entire Trust Territory, including the Northern Mariana Islands, the Caroline Islands, and the Marshall Islands. The United States intends to submit the results of negotiations on the future political status of the Marshalls and Carolines to the people of the islands in a plebiscite similar to that which took place in the presence of United Nations observers in the Northern Marianas.

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