

MEMORANDUM

NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL

EXECUTIVE  
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PL 9-1  
SP  
ACTION

March 22, 1976

MEMORANDUM FOR MARGI VANDERHYE

FROM: THOMAS J. BARNES

SUBJECT: Draft Press Release for Signing Ceremony for the  
Northern Marianas Covenant

The President will sign H. J. Res. 549 approving the Northern  
Marianas Covenant at 3:00 p. m. on March 24, 1976. Attached at  
Tab A is a proposed press release.

State and Interior concur in this draft.

*Close out*

the Northern Mariana Islands and the Congress of the United States.

Those who were involved in this careful and thorough process are to be congratulated: The Marianas Political Status Commission; Ambassador Haydn Williams and members of the American Delegation; those members of the Congress who worked closely with Ambassador Williams during the negotiations; and those who provided the leadership in moving the joint resolution through its final stages in the House and the Senate. I refer to the members of the Senate and House Interior Committees ~~and in particular to~~ <sup>including</sup> Senator J. Bennett Johnston ~~of Louisiana and Representative~~ <sup>and Senator Paul H. Douglas</sup> ~~of California.~~ <sup>Chairman John Haley, Cong. Phil Burton, Cong. Joe Stubby, and Cong. Bill Keating</sup>

The decision to approve the Covenant was not taken lightly by either the people of the Northern Mariana Islands or by the Congress of the United States. Its provisions and the significance of the islands becoming a part of the United States were subjected to careful scrutiny and weeks and months of debate in the Marianas and in Washington. The United Nations-observed plebiscite of last June was conducted in a fair and impartial manner under the able supervision of Mr. Erwin D. Canham, the Plebiscite Commissioner. The final plebiscite vote, with 95% of those eligible to vote casting their ballots, was a resounding 78.8% popular approval of the Covenant. Following months of open hearings the final vote in the House and Senate resulted in equally impressive