

Staff Yes  No   
if

OFFICE OF TERRITORIAL AFFAIRS  
U. S. DEPARTMENT OF INTERIOR  
WASHINGTON, D. C. 20240

FRED M. ZEDER II  
DIRECTOR

March 26, 1976

Lt. General Brent Scowcroft, USAF  
Assistant of the President for National Security Affairs  
The White House  
Washington, D. C.

Dear Brent:

Here is a follow-up on our phone conversation this afternoon.

On Wednesday, the President signed the "Covenant to Establish a Commonwealth of the Northern Marianas Islands in Political Union with the United States." For the past five years, Ambassador F. Haydn Williams, as the President's Personal Representative, and his staff had the major responsibility for this project. There will now be a period, estimated to last about 18 months, in which the representatives of the 14,000 people living on the islands in the Northern Marianas chain will begin drafting their constitution and moving toward self-government.

All of Micronesia is divided into six districts in an area which covers over three million square miles of ocean. Nine separate languages are spoken. The Office of Territorial Affairs, in addition to our responsibilities in the rest of the territories, is charged with managing the affairs of the Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands under the 1947 United Nations Trusteeship Agreement. Our annual budget approximates \$100 million for this operation.

Within the next five years, the remainder of the Trust Territory, like the Northern Marianas, will choose the type of political association they wish to establish with the United States. There has been much conjecture regarding what form of alliance Micronesia will seek. Options include free association, independence, commonwealth, etc. The 100,000 people living in the other five districts are represented in political status negotiations by the Congress of Micronesia, a locally elected body. Two months ago the Micronesian Constitutional Convention

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completed a 90-day session in which they prepared a preliminary document outlining their views as to the future internal government of Micronesia.

This office has reviewed the draft and finds it much too broad and permissive. If allowed to be effective, it would prevent the United States from achieving its Presidentially-approved security requirements in Micronesia. We understand Ambassador Williams' office has also studied this document.

In my judgment, the most effective way to resolve the future status issue of Micronesia would be through direct contact between this office and the Micronesian political leadership. We have their confidence (see attached letter) and we hold the pursestrings.

The Office of Micronesian Status Negotiations under Ambassador Williams is funded by the Department of Defense and the State Department. It is not anticipated that we in Territorial Affairs would require any such outside funding. We would, of course, continue to call upon other Federal agencies in this effort.

As you may know, arrangements are presently underway to have this Office assume the lead role in discussions with Guam on its future relations with the Federal government. This would closely parallel our proposed responsibility for the future political status of Micronesia.

Sincerely,



Fred M. Zeder II

FMZ/cvm

Attachment

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