



United States Department of the Interior

OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20240

Honorable Carlos S. Camacho
Governor of the Northern Mariana Islands
Saipan, Mariana Islands 96950

Dear Governor Camacho:

In order to implement President Carter's message of February 14 to the Congress concerning United States policies toward the territories, I write to express to you my interest, and the interest of my colleagues in this Department, in conferring with you whenever you are disposed to do so on the subject of the political development of the Northern Mariana Islands.

You are, I know, aware of the President's remarks on this subject, but I shall repeat the pertinent portion of the message here, as a point of beginning:

In keeping with our fundamental policy of self-determination, all options for political development should be open to the people of the insular territories so long as their choices are implemented when economically feasible and in a manner that does not compromise the national security of the United States.

If the people of any of the territories wish to modify their current political status, they should express their aspirations to the Secretary of the Interior through their elected leaders, as is the case now. The Secretary, along with representatives of the appropriate Federal agencies, will, in turn, consult with territorial leaders on the issues raised. Following such discussions, a full report will be submitted to the Congress, along with the Secretary's proposals and recommendations.

Accordingly, we in the Interior Department look to you, and to other elected leaders of the Northern Mariana Islands, to make known to us the aspirations of the people of the Northern Mariana Islands for any modifications in their current political status. While we in the Executive Branch cannot "negotiate" changes in the Northern Mariana Islands' status, because the political status of any territory is constitutionally within the responsibility of the Congress, we can and will consult with you and your representatives, and we will make known to the Congress all proposals that you submit to us. I give you the assurance that, whether we are able to support the proposals or not as a

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matter of administration policy, we shall inform the Congress of them. If it appears to us that our consultations will be advanced by the presence of representatives from other agencies of the Executive Branch, we will invite them to join us.

We are mindful of the requirement in section 902 of the Covenant that the President designate a special representative to discuss the relationship between the Northern Marianas and the United States "not less frequently than every ten years." In inviting your comments on political development at this time, we are not suggesting that it is time to invoke that provision of the Covenant. We would be happy to pursue these discussions in light of section 902 of the Covenant if that is your wish, but we are not proposing that discussions of political development should necessarily fulfill, supplant, or preclude the commitment that is contained in section 902. We are, in any event, prepared to proceed in whatever manner you prefer.

I, or Deputy Under Secretary Wallace O. Green, will be writing to you separately and soon with respect to other aspects of the President's message. We will be writing you, for example, concerning the elimination of Federal economic constraints, in order to follow up on the directive on that subject contained elsewhere in the President's message. We do not expect to defer action on this subject, nor indeed upon any others of current concern, pending the completion of the task set before the Northern Marianas Law Commission. We would not use the Commission as a device to delay action upon proposals that we agree with you deserve immediate attention.

Because they, too, are elected leaders of the Northern Marianas, I am sending letters similar to this to the President of the Senate, the Speaker of the House, and the Representative to the United States in Washington.

We look forward to learning how you would like to proceed.

Sincerely,

SECRETARY