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Congress of the United States Committee on Foreign Affairs

House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

30 July 1981

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The Honorable
James L. Buckley
Under Secretary of State
for Security Assistance, Science and Technology
Department of State
Washington, D.C. 20520

Dear Jim:

I want to take this opportunity to respond in general terms to some of the issues raised in your April 30 letter regarding American policy toward Micronesia. I look forward as well to further consultations with you and other members of the Executive Branch on the specific questions involved in the compact of free association.

I believe that the compact of free association initialed in the last Administration provides a workable and useful basis for concluding the negotiations. While unresolved issues remain, it would be a mistake to disregard the substantial progress which has been made to date.

There are several compelling reasons why we should proceed along the present track. In the first place, while refinements may be necessary in a number of areas, the compact honors the responsibilities and needs of the United States, while protecting the economic and political interests of the Micronesians. Secondly, it would not appear to be to our negotiating advantage at this point to begin the negotiations anew. Finally, an Administration decision to discard the current compact is likely to be seen as evidence that the United States is in no hurry to terminate the trusteeship, despite the fact that the trusteeship relationship is a conspicuous anachronism in present-day world politics.

Basically, any agreement which protects our legitimate security interests, and which is approved by the Micronesians in a plebiscite, would be acceptable.

One cautionary note I would like to enter here is that Congressional approval of the compact will be made more difficult by the degree of budget cutting of domestic programs which the Administration and Congress have adopted this year. Before voting for the compact, Congress would probably have to be persuaded, as our negotiators have claimed, that the financial obligations we would assume under free association would be less than the money Congress would allocate under a continuation of the present status.

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Finally, on the question of our obligation to those Micronesians who have suffered from our nuclear testing, we should be guided by the principle, as spelled out in Section 177 of the compact, that our Government accepts responsibility for compensation resulting from U.S. nuclear testing in the Northern Marshall Islands. The tragic history of the Bikinians and others affected by U.S. nuclear testing and the tragic and frequent mistakes made by our Government in trying to rectify the initial damage underscore the importance of a humane American policy now.

I hope you will be able to take these comments into account as you complete the interagency review of the compact of free association.

Sincerely yours,

Stephen J. Solarz
Chairman
Subcommittee on Asian
and Pacific Affairs

SJS/dfs