

THE WHITE HOUSE

Office of the Press Secretary
(Costa Mesa, California)

For Immediate Release

November 3, 1986

STATEMENT BY THE PRESIDENT

Today, I am pleased to announce the beginning of new relationships between the United States and the island groups that have emerged from the Pacific Islands Trust Territory. One of these -- the Northern Mariana Islands -- is now a United States Commonwealth and its people are now United States citizens. The other two -- the Republic of the Marshall Islands and the Federated States of Micronesia -- are sovereign, self-governing nations in free association with the United States.

The fourth and remaining island group -- Palau -- has not yet finally approved its compact of free association. Until Palau's future political status is resolved, the United States will continue to discharge its responsibilities there as administering authority under the trusteeship agreement.

The United States liberated these islands during our westward drive across the Pacific toward the end of World War II and has administered them as a United Nations strategic trusteeship since 1947. In these last four decades, we have worked with the islanders to improve health, education and social service facilities throughout the more than two thousand islands comprising the trust territory. Our most valuable contribution to the islands, a legacy in which we can take pride, are the democratic, representative governments created and now enjoyed by the peoples of the trust territory.

The United States is happy to commence these new relationships with the Northern Mariana Islands, the Marshall Islands, and the Federated States of Micronesia. We deeply appreciate those who have worked so long and hard -- in the negotiations and in the Congress -- to fashion and enact the commonwealth covenant and the compacts of free association. We especially want to welcome the people of the Northern Mariana Islands into the American family as fellow citizens. We are honored by the choices of the peoples and leaders of the two new freely associated states to associate with us in close and long-lasting relationships which reflect the good will and affection between our peoples. For these peoples, the long years of trusteeship are over and the dignity and opportunity for self-government are here. We in the United States pledge our friendship and support as the Northern Mariana Islands, the Marshall Islands, and the Federated States of Micronesia now walk the paths they themselves have chosen.

#