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Biography

Richard M. Nixon was the 37th president of the United States, serving from January 20, 1969, until his resignation from office in August 1974. He was elected to the U.S. House of Representatives in 1946, elected to the U.S. Senate in 1950, and served as Vice-President in the Eisenhower Administration from January 1953 to January 1961. He lost the 1960 presidential election to John F. Kennedy in a very close race; and he ran unsuccessfully for the California governorship in 1962. Although he had pledged during his 1968 campaign to end the Vietnam conflict, the war continued under his administration with saturation bombing of North Vietnam and invasions of Cambodia and Laos. President Nixon did manage to ease tensions with the Soviet Union and unexpectedly made a very significant trip in 1972 to mainland China as an initial step toward formalizing relations with that Communist regime. Widespread opposition to the Vietnam War continued to ferment civil disturbances and a severe recession accompanied by inflation led the president to impose wage and price controls. After President Nixon and Vice-President Spiro T. Agnew were reelected in 1972, both encountered substantial legal challenges that led to their resignations. Agnew was accused of taking bribes while governor of Maryland and vice-president and was forced to resign; President Nixon appointed Representative Gerald R. Ford to replace him. Impeachment proceedings directed at the president were initiated in the U.S. House of Representative based on a series of illegal acts that came to be called the Watergate Affair. After the U.S. Supreme Court directed him to release secret tapes of his private conversations, President Nixon resigned from office on August 9, 1974, rather than subject himself and the country to impeachment proceedings.

Nature of Document Search

President Nixon's presidential papers became the subject of extended litigation following his resignation and resulted in the enactment of the Presidential Records Act of 1978. As a result, Nixon's presidential materials (1969–1974) were placed at the National

¹ The Nixon presidential papers have been kept temporarily at the National Archives pending resolution of disputes about the release of certain of the papers and the management and operation of the Nixon Library. They are located at National Archives & Records Administration, 8601 Adelphi Road, College Park, MD 20740-6001, (301) 837-3290 (Nixon Materials Staff), www.archives.gov.

Archives in College Park, MD where they are separately administered. His other papers, from before and after his presidency, are located at the privately-funded and operated Nixon Library in Yorba Linda, California, where he was born. Plans are currently underway to bring the Nixon Library under the authority of the National Archives, as is the case with respect to the other nine presidential libraries covered by this project. We reviewed documents at the National Archives on January 19 and 21, 2005, and visited the Nixon Library in Yorba Linda on January 27, 2005. At the National Archives, with the assistance of the Nixon Presidential Materials Staff, we found documents pertaining to our subject matter in the Under Secretaries Committee Memorandum Files (1969-1974), the National Security Council Institutional Files, the National Security Council Country Files, and the White House Central Files. The Nixon Library had no documents relating to Micronesia.

Highlights of Nixon Documents

In early 1969 the new appointees of the Nixon Administration recognized the need to reexamine American policy for the Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands. President Kennedy's 1962 National Security Action Memorandum No. 145, aimed at bringing the territory into the United States through a plebiscite by 1968, remained national policy. However, past administrations had failed to make any discernible progress towards its objectives. Although the final report of the Micronesian Future Political Status Commission was not due until mid-1969, widely publicized statements by its members indicated that they were likely to endorse a relationship of free association with the United States (or some other major power) rather than territorial status under U.S. sovereignty. This unexpected challenge to the underlying assumptions of NSAM No. 145 was accompanied by mounting pressures from other Micronesian sources. The Congress of Micronesia in January 1969 catalogued voluminous complaints directed at U.S. administration of the territory and requested an investigation by the U.N. Trusteeship Council. On some of the most critical disputes between the Micronesians and trust territory officials, the local residents were actively supported by Peace Corps volunteers. When these Peace Corps activities were brought to President Nixon's attention, he told one of his special assistants, John D. Ehrlickman, that he was interested "in their illegal political activities" and asked for "a report on specific action taken on this point."

Letter, February 28, 1969, Uherbelau to President

President Nixon approved National Security Adviser Kissinger's recommendation regarding the need to reaffirm United States strategic requirements in the Trust Territory and to formulate "an action plan to assure permanent U.S. control over the territory." The matter was assigned to the newly created Under Secretaries Committee, with the understanding that one of Kissinger's staff would participate "to knock heads together and make sure that any differences between State and Interior are brought clearly to the President's attention and quickly resolved." The Micronesian problem was brought to the president's personal attention by a letter from Representative Rogers C. B. Morton of Maryland enclosing a short memorandum from former congressman N. Neiman Craley,

Jr. who was now working for the Trust Territory. Craley's memo, urging the Nixon Administration to give immediate attention to the problems and future status of Micronesia, was circulated to Kissinger and the new secretaries at State, Defense, and Interior. Before the Under Secretaries Committee met to discuss the issue, State and Interior circulated briefing papers that summarized past policy decisions and debates among the agencies. Interior's memorandum highlighted differences between State and Interior and recent political developments that called into question the desirability of a prompt plebiscite in the Trust Territory. State's paper reviewed the unsuccessful efforts to persuade the U.S. Congress to approve legislation creating a status commission in 1968 and the deteriorating situation in Micronesia. After discussing the subject on March 24, 1969, the Under Secretaries Committee asked State to prepare a memorandum which would serve as the basis for the committee's recommendations to the president and renewed the suggestion from earlier administrations that the president appoint a special assistant to deal with Micronesia's future political status.

Memorandum, February 7, 1969, Richardson to Under Secretaries Committee

Memorandum, March 6, 1969, Kissinger to President

National Security Study Memorandum, March 6, 1969

Memorandum, March 18, 1969, Sneider to Kissinger

Memorandum, March 19, 1969, Sneider to Kissinger

Memorandum, March 19, 1969, Ruser to Under Secretaries Committee

Memorandum, March 20, 1969, Kissinger to Richardson

Letter, March 20, 1969, Morton to President

Memorandum, March 25, 1969, Sneider to Kissinger

The new Secretary of the Interior, Walter J. Hickel, quickly rejected any idea of a special assistant in the White House to deal with the trust territory and decided that he should take charge. Without waiting for the Under Secretaries Committee to act, Hickel advised the president that he had developed an action plan for the Trust Territory and planned to visit the area in early May if the president concurred. Although there was opposition within the White House to Hickel's initiative, President Nixon met with him on April 29, 1969, and approved his trip. The Under Secretaries Committee had to move more expeditiously than originally planned in order to have a presidential-approved policy in place that would guide (and limit) Hickel's representations to the Micronesian people. As approved by President Nixon, the new policy differed significantly from that of the earlier two administrations. It was decided that the United States should abandon its earlier commitment to include an independence option on any plebiscite, because of the increasing risk that the Micronesians might select it, and to exclude any consideration of a free association option as well. These decisions were based in large measure on the committee's reading of Congressional sentiment at the time regarding the future status of the territory. In essence, the committee (and President Nixon) approved the position long advocated by the Interior Department – that the Micronesians would be offered only an unincorporated territory status comparable to Guam's. Hickel was authorized to invite the Micronesians to discuss their future status in Washington, without disclosing the

limitations within which U.S. negotiators would be operating, and to announce an action program to address Micronesian complaints about the trust territory administration. Hickel accomplished his mission with considerable flair in May 1969 and subsequently reported to President Nixon that he had been successful in establishing personal rapport with the Micronesian people. His action program and strategy were strongly endorsed by Kissinger in a memorandum to the president.²

Memorandum, April 15, 1969, Hickel to President
Memorandum, April 16, 1969, Ehrlichman to President
Memorandum, April 22, 1969, Sneider to Kissinger
Memorandum, April 25, 1969, Whitaker to Cole
Memorandum, May 9, 1969, Hickel to President
Memorandum, May 19, 1969, Kissinger to President

During the summer months of 1969, both Micronesian and American officials prepared for the political status negotiations that had been offered by Hickel during his visit and eventually accepted by the Congress of Micronesia. By happenstance, President Nixon stopped in Guam in July 1969 on his way to Asia and met briefly with Trust Territory officials and Micronesian leaders. The Micronesian leaders handed President Nixon a resolution rushed through the Congress of Micronesia that stated: "The president and the Congress of the United States are urgently requested to give serious consideration to the future political status of Micronesia and the ways in which this status should be finally resolved." Back in Washington, the interagency working group proceeded to formalize the U. S. position to be presented to the Micronesians at the upcoming status discussions within the strict limitations imposed by the president's earlier decision. The principal issues dividing the agencies related to whether the Micronesians should have an elected, rather than an appointed, governor under their future status and be entitled to shape their own governmental institutions through a constitutional convention. Most knowledgeable observers in Washington recognized that this organic act approach, heavily influenced by powerful leaders in the U.S. Congress, was not going to be acceptable to the Micronesian leaders, with the possible exception of some in the Northern Marianas.

Letter, July 21, 1969, Salii to President
Letter, July 24, 1969, Uherbelau to President, enclosing Senate Joint Resolution No. 31, Congress of Micronesia, July 24, 1969
Memorandum, August 21, 1969, Hartman to Under Secretaries Committee
Memorandum, August 25, 1969, Loesch to Under Secretaries Committee
Memorandum, September 9, 1969, Richardson to Under Secretaries Committee

Although useful in many respects, the first round of status negotiations in October 1969 was inconclusive. The United States representatives decided not to present their

² Willens & Siemer, *National Security and Self-Determination: United States Policy in Micronesia (1961-1972)* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 2000) [hereafter *National Security*], 139-47.

proposed legislation until the Micronesian delegation had disclosed its own agenda. Although the Congress of Micronesia had endorsed the free association status recommended by its Future Political Status Commission in its final report, the Micronesian representatives did not insist on such a relationship as the only acceptable outcome to the negotiations with the United States. They presented instead an agenda of 11 items; and it became clear that their principal concerns were to retain unqualified control over the use of Micronesian land, to have their own constitution, and to have far more self-government than the American officials had either contemplated or were prepared to accommodate. Although Interior officials struggled to find some acceptable compromise on the land and other issues, both Defense and State officials rejected any such compromise at this earlier stage in the status negotiations. After the discussions ended, the three departments reevaluated their negotiating strategy and reached agreement on changes in the U.S. position that might make it more palatable to the Micronesians. At a meeting of high-level officials in December 1969, however, Kissinger rejected any such compromise and insisted that the American negotiators not abandon the organic act approach.³

Letter, November 21, 1969, Loesch to Kissinger
Memorandum, December 11, 1969, Holdridge to Kissinger

The refusal of the United States to modify its position, coupled with the heightened focus of the Micronesians on free association, led to an impasse at the second round of negotiations in May 1970. For the first time the Micronesian representatives advanced their non-negotiable Four Principles, emphasizing their desire for sovereignty and full self-determination, the right to adopt their own constitution, and their insistence that any future relationship with the United States be terminable unilaterally by either party. The United States essentially responded with their earlier proposal, which now included provision for a constitutional convention and was labeled a “commonwealth” proposal in the hope that this would enhance its acceptability to the Micronesians. This new version was firmly rejected by the Micronesians and the U.S. officials were neither prepared nor authorized to deal with the new Micronesian position, which seemed to lead to either free association or independence. Once President Nixon in 1969 had rejected the free association alternative, U.S. officials never really considered this approach even as it became clear that it was the preferred status of the Micronesian negotiators other than those from the Northern Mariana Islands. Over the dissent of some Northern Marianas representatives, the Congress of Micronesia in August 1970 endorsed the position of their negotiators and United States officials concluded that the executive branch had to reconsider its strategy regarding Micronesia’s future political status.

Letter, March 19, 1970, Salii to Loesch
Letter, April 8, 1970, Loesch to Richardson
Memorandum, April 11, 1970, Richardson to Under Secretaries Committee
Memorandum, April 13, 1970, Holdridge to Kissinger
Memorandum, April 29, 1970, Richardson to Under Secretaries Committee
Memorandum, May 31, 1970, Kissinger to President

³ *National Security*, 157-59, 167-69.

Memorandum, June 11, 1970, Haig to Holdridge
Letter, August 19, 1970, Takesy to President enclosing House Joint
Resolution No. 87, Congress of Micronesia, August 14, 1970
Memorandum, September 10, 1970, Johnson to President
Memorandum, September 15, 1970, Holdridge to Kissinger

As the U.S. officials began their review in the last months of 1970, they were influenced by the growing evidence that the Mariana Islands District – one of six districts within the Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands – was strongly opposed to the status objectives of the other five districts. There was a long history of Marianas pursuit of affiliation with the United States and U.S. citizenship, prompted by Marianas proximity to Guam, the ethnic relationship shared by the Chamorros on Guam and the Northern Marianas, and its experience under the Navy’s administration. Repeatedly, however, United Nations and United States officials had insisted that the Northern Marianas remain with the other districts in working out a common political status after termination of the Trusteeship Agreement. At a November 1970 election in the Northern Marianas for seats in the Congress of Micronesia, the four candidates advocating a commonwealth relationship with the United States won overwhelmingly. In Washington, the Department of Defense emphasized its future land needs in the Trust Territory (especially in the Marianas) in light of the potential withdrawal from other bases in the Western Pacific. Under these circumstances the Under Secretaries Committee recognized that it had to evaluate status alternatives that involved some special arrangements for the Northern Marianas. On March 31, 1971, the Under Secretaries Committee submitted its recommendations to the president; it included a fallback option for separate treatment of the Northern Marianas.⁴

Letter, September 16, 1970, Camacho to President enclosing Mariana Islands
District Legislature Resolution 12-1970, August 21, 1970
Memorandum, November 30, 1970, Hartman to Under Secretaries
Committee
Letter, March 4, 1971, Camacho to President
Memorandum, March 31, 1971, Irwin to President
Letter, March 31, 1971, Rogers to President

In March 1971 President Nixon appointed F. Haydn Williams to represent the federal government in future status negotiations with the Micronesians. Once Secretary Hickel had been removed from Interior, Kissinger recommended to the president that the responsibility for the negotiations be “fixed in a single individual who would have direct access to the White House while receiving his instructions though the existing interdepartmental committee structure.” Upon Kissinger’s recommendation, President Nixon in June 1971 approved the recommendations of the Under Secretaries Committee for a new strategy in negotiating with the Micronesians, including the alternative of dealing with the Northern Marianas separately if necessary.

Memorandum, December 24, 1970, Kissinger to President

⁴ *National Security*, 20-27, 93-95.

Memorandum, February 10, 1971, Kissinger to President
White House Press Release, March 13, 1971
Memorandum, March 19, 1971, Kissinger to President
Memorandum, April 30, 1971, White House notes on Memorandum, April 26, 1971, from Kissinger to President
Memorandum, June 23, 1971, Kissinger to President
Letter, June 24, 1971, Nixon to Williams
Memorandum, July 20, 1971, Kissinger to Under Secretaries Committee
Memorandum, July 28, 1971, Irwin to Under Secretaries Committee

After organizing his staff and meeting informally with the leaders of the Micronesian negotiating team, Williams led the U.S. delegation to the third round of formal negotiations in Hawaii in October 1971. The Northern Marianas leaders continued to urge that the United States negotiate separately with them about a future commonwealth relationship for their people under U.S. sovereignty. The two Northern Marianas representatives on the Micronesian status commission, Edward DLG Pangelinan and Herman Q. Guerrero, argued within the Micronesian negotiating commission for recognition of the ultimate right of the Marianas people to determine their own political future. This round of negotiations showed considerable progress toward an agreement between the parties, with the United States now willing to consider some form of free association and the Micronesians seemingly willing to make land available to the United States for defense purposes. U.S. officials met informally with Guerrero and Pangelinan during this session and assured them that the United States was sympathetic to the Marianas position and would not force them into an unwanted relationship.

Memorandum, July 30, 1971, Irwin to Under Secretaries Committee
Letter, September 9, 1971, Laird to Williams
Memorandum, October 23, 1971, Froebe to Haig
Memorandum, November 1, 1971, Kissinger to President
Letter, November 24, 1971, Williams to President
Memorandum, December 1, 1971, Kissinger to President
Memorandum, December 17, 1971, Holdridge to Kissinger
Memorandum, December 23, 1971, Kissinger to President

During the several months before the next (and fourth) round of Micronesian negotiations in Palau, the question of separate political status discussions with the Northern Marianas was further evaluated both in the Trust Territory and Washington. The Northern Marianas leadership was determined to press their case directly with U.S. officials, especially after the Congress of Micronesia refused to consider a resolution that might recognize the right of each district to pursue its own status aspirations. Defense officials in Washington began to focus on their land needs in the Northern Marianas, especially Tinian, and to evaluate negotiating strategies to achieve these objectives. Williams asked the president to amend his negotiating instructions to enable him to call the new relationship “free association” rather than “modified commonwealth” and to acknowledge if necessary that sovereignty resided in the Micronesian people. The

president approved this request. Under the circumstances Williams decided that the United States should agree to separate negotiations with the Northern Marianas if a proper request was made on its behalf. Informal advice along these lines was communicated to Pangelinan and Guerrero and they made such a request for separate status negotiations on April 12, 1972, during the Palau round of status discussions. To the surprise and consternation of the Micronesian representatives, Williams on behalf of the United States agreed to this request, concluding that “it does not seem that the American policy of seeking a common solution for the entire Territory is any longer feasible or desirable.”⁵

Memorandum, February 16, 1972, Holdridge to Kissinger

Memorandum, March 8, 1972, Williams to President

Memorandum, March 27, 1972, Haig to Williams

Letter, May 24, 1972, Williams to Irwin

Letter, June 12, 1972, Williams to President

The negotiations between the Northern Marianas, represented by the 15-member Marianas Political Status Commission, and the U.S. Delegation headed by Ambassador Williams began in December 1972 and culminated with the signing of the status agreement on February 15, 1975. The first four sessions of these negotiations took place during the Nixon Administration. Before the negotiations began, the U.S. agencies formulated their objectives and negotiating strategy in dealing with the Northern Marianas. The Department of the Interior seemed prepared to accept a commonwealth status for the Northern Marianas because the alternatives of unincorporated territorial status or reintegration between Guam and the Northern Marianas would both, for different reasons, not be acceptable to the Northern Marianas. Secretary of Defense Melvin Laird advised Williams of his department’s need to acquire the entire island of Tinian. Before the second round of negotiations in May 1973 the Under Secretaries Committee approved a detailed set of instructions for Ambassador Williams relating to the political, legal, economic, and defense aspects of any future relationship between the United States and the Northern Marianas. The proposed future commonwealth relationship began to take shape at the second round of negotiations and was fleshed out in great detail at the third and fourth sessions in December 1973 and May 1974. After each negotiating session, Williams advised President Nixon of the progress made and the principal issues remaining to be negotiated by the two parties. By the time the president resigned on August 1974, it was virtually certain that a final agreement between the United States and the Northern Marianas would soon be reached that would achieve the objectives of both parties.⁶

Memorandum, July 15, 1972, Kissinger to President

Memorandum, September 20, 1972, Williams to President

Memorandum, October 2, 1972, Kissinger to President

Memorandum, October 3, 1972, Kissinger to Williams

⁵ *National Security*, 232-47.

⁶ Willens & Siemer, *An Honorable Accord: The Covenant between the Northern Mariana Islands and the United States* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2001), 62-69, 89-90, 130-32, 146-65.

Letter, October 27, 1972, Williams to President
Memorandum, November 7, 1972, Irwin to Under Secretaries Committee
Memorandum, December 4, 1972, Laird to President
Letter, December 12, 1972, President to Williams
Memorandum, December 26, 1972, Irwin to Williams
Letter, January 5, 1973, Williams to President
Memorandum, March 19, 1973, Williams to Under Secretaries Committee
Letter, June 29, 1973, Williams to President
Letter, June 18, 1974, Williams to President
Letter, July 30, 1974, Ingersoll to President