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**Author** Dorrance, John C.

**Corporate Author**

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UNITED STATES SECURITY INTERESTS IN THE PACIFIC ISLANDS

John C. Dorrance

Author's Address:

Office of Australia and  
New Zealand Affairs  
Department of State  
Washington, D.C. 20520

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Washington, D.C.

Office Tel: (202) 632-9690  
Home Tel: (301) 299-5310

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## UNITED STATES SECURITY INTERESTS IN THE PACIFIC ISLANDS\*

by John C. Dorrance 1

The World War II seizure and then the transfer of administration of the Micronesian islands from Japan to the United States brought new responsibilities in the area to the U.S. For the first time the U.S. controlled nearly all of the islands north of the equator between the U.S. West Coast and the Philippines. Nonetheless, for most Americans the Pacific islands faded into history in the two decades following the region's sea and island battles; consciousness of this vast area was limited to perceptions offered by James Michener's classic "Tales of the South Pacific" and "Return to Paradise." Major defense-related American decisions having an effect on the area in the immediate post-war years were few indeed. The islands of Micronesia, previously governed by Japan under a League of Nations Mandate, were formally transferred to U.S. administration in 1947 by an agreement between the U.S. Government and the United Nations Security Council which established the Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands. Although that agreement recognized and protected American defense interests in the Trust Territory, all World War II bases in these and other Pacific islands, except those on Guam and in the Hawaiian islands, were closed. The only significant U.S. defense activities were nuclear testing (which ended in 1962) and the later establishment of the Kwajalein Missile Range facility in the Marshall Islands.

American neglect of the area was perhaps natural. The non-U.S. territories and colonies were administered by NATO or ANZUS allies and pressures for change within the region were minimal and peaceful. There were no threats -- internal or external -- to vaguely defined American interests. Washington thought it could ignore the Pacific islands and focused its attention on pressing problems elsewhere.

The 1960s and the 1970s brought change, both internal and external, that Washington eventually recognized and decided it must deal with. By 1980 most of the non-American islands had

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\*The following analysis relates primarily to the Pacific Ocean area occupied by American Samoa, Cook Islands, Fiji, French Polynesia, Guam, Kiribati, Nauru, New Caledonia, Niue, Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands, Tokelau Islands, Tonga, Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands (Northern Marianas, Palau, Yap, Truk, Ponape, Kosrae, Marshall Islands), Tuvalu, Vanuatu, and Western Samoa.

achieved independence or full self-government. Moreover, negotiations on the future political status of Micronesia promised further changes in the Pacific political map; the four political entities that make up the Trust Territory -- the Northern Mariana Islands, Palau, the Federated States of Micronesia and the Marshall Islands -- were moving separately to a commonwealth or free association relationship with the United States. Parallel to these developments, the Soviets had begun to probe the area politically; their navy, fishing fleets and research vessels also regularly cruised South Pacific waters. Although Soviet efforts to establish close diplomatic relationships with the new island states have thus far met with failure, Moscow has had some success in developing political links through such devices as trade union relationships. Moreover (and of key importance to this discussion of security interests), by the early 1980s the long-term Soviet military buildup in the Pacific had reached proportions that now threaten a military balance so long favorable to the US and its friends and allies in Asia and the Pacific.

Following are illustrative data on the Soviet military inventory in the Pacific at the end of 1982; in some areas they already exceed those for U.S. forces. The ships and aircraft listed operate from bases in Vietnam, the Kuril Islands and the Soviet Asian mainland. <sup>2</sup>

Soviet Combat Aircraft (excluding air defense aircraft) in the Pacific Area

175 medium bombers  
1,200 tactical aircraft  
445 naval aircraft

Soviet Navy Ships in the Pacific Area

1 aircraft carrier  
124 submarines  
83 principal surface combatant ships  
327 other combatant ships

This inventory represents a growth of several hundred percent in the past ten years, continues to expand, and bears little or no relationship to the defensive requirements of Soviet interests in the Pacific. The capabilities of these forces are little recognized outside professional defense circles. As one example, the "Backfire" bombers in the above inventory represent a four-fold increase in that capability over the past decade. They have a combat radius which permits them to attack, from Soviet Far East bases, targets throughout the North Pacific and some of the South Pacific. Operating from Vietnam, they could reach targets in Australia and parts

of the South Pacific. Although not listed above, about one-third of the Soviet SS-20 intermediate range ballistic missile force has been deployed to the Soviet Far East. This equates to about 250 nuclear warheads targeted on East Asia and the Pacific.

As a result of these developments, Washington in the 1970s began to refine the definition of U.S. security interests and associated objectives in the Pacific islands. However, the assumptions on which its analyses were based flowed from the experience of the previous 40 years and represented fundamental premises or principles applicable everywhere:

--Wishing away war and its horrors is futile of itself; the only adequate insurance against war, and for national security and survival, is a level of defense preparedness sufficient to assure that potential adversaries will calculate the cost of aggression as too high to contemplate seriously.

--War and aggression are no respectors of the non-aligned, the neutral, or of the weak; they can occur in the most unexpected places; witness the Falklands Islands crisis as a recent example of this truism. A global conflict would spare few if any.

--The U.S. alone cannot provide adequate deterrence in the face of expanding Soviet offensive war-fighting capabilities. Deterrence requires the full range of post-World War II alliances in Asia, the Pacific, Europe, and the Americas. It also requires a degree of cooperation from friends not linked in formal alliance but nonetheless prepared to strengthen deterrence through other means commensurate with their resources and their other interests.

The above of course was only one element in the context of broader reviews of overall U.S. interests and policy related to the political evolution of most of the region from colonial dependency to independence or self-government. Security considerations were by no means dominant; the primary focus was on the need to develop new patterns of political and other relationships.

A further consideration was the change in military technology since World War II. The development of long-range aircraft, aerial refueling techniques, nuclear-powered ships, satellite reconnaissance and communications, and of intermediate and intercontinental range ballistic missiles largely eliminated the need for the galaxy of "stepping-stone" Pacific bases essential to both the Japanese and the allies in World War II.

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If size and population were the sole measures, the island states and territories of the Pacific would have a very small claim to outside attention. Scattered over some 25 million square miles of ocean, the Pacific islands offer a wide range of independent and self-governing states, and of New Zealand, French, and American dependencies which enjoy varying levels of self-government. <sup>3</sup> Although the region's 20 states and territories comprise about 10,000 islands and their peoples speak some 1200 languages (800 in Papua New Guinea alone), the islands are mostly uninhabited, have a total population of only five million, and a land area of merely 215,000 square miles. One state, Papua New Guinea, has 80 percent of the region's land area and 60 percent of its population. A paucity or maldistribution of natural resources, population growth, and population density in some areas assure that the economic and social well-being of most of the region's nations will remain largely dependent on external assistance for the foreseeable future.

The region nevertheless offers other characteristics that assure it a considerable degree of positive uniqueness. The transition from colonialism to independence or self-government has been without bloodshed and revolution, democratic institutions have flourished, and respect for human rights is without parallel elsewhere in the Third World. <sup>4</sup> The Pacific islands states also have established regional institutions unique in terms of successful, pragmatic political and economic cooperation, and avoidance of ideological content and conflict. Some states have assumed positive global roles, e.g. Fiji's participation in Middle East peace-keeping operations.

With the conclusion of Micronesia's 1983 acts of self-determination and with the forthcoming termination of the UN Trusteeship Agreement for these islands, most of the political entities within the region will have become independent or fully self-governing. Two major exceptions, the French territories of New Caledonia and French Polynesia, will continue their political evolution in the 1980s with New Caledonia probably moving to some form of independence.

American Samoa and Guam undoubtedly will retain close links with the U.S., although the nature of their relationships could change. As an example, the people of Guam in a recent referendum by a plurality voted to seek a commonwealth relationship with the U.S. which can provide for a greater level of self-government.

Within the above context, it has become increasingly clear that U.S. interests in the area are important and are

susceptible to damage by insensitivity or by a return to neglect. These interests are multiple -- some are direct and some are derivative of interests elsewhere.<sup>5</sup> Direct interests flow from the U.S. territorial presence (the State of Hawaii and the Territories of Guam and American Samoa) and from the present and anticipated future political relationships with the Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands. With termination of the Micronesian trusteeship, the Northern Mariana Islands will become an additional territorial interest as they enter into a commonwealth relationship with the U.S. Approved in a 1975 plebiscite, the relationship provides for U.S. sovereignty over the islands, and U.S. citizenship for their inhabitants. The Republic of Palau in a February 10, 1983 plebiscite rejected independence or a close relationship with the U.S. in favor of free association with the U.S. by a vote of 62 percent. The citizens of the Federated States of Micronesia (Yap, Truk, Ponape and Kosrae) by a vote of 79 percent opted for free association in a similar plebiscite on June 21, 1983. The people of the Republic of the Marshall Islands chose free association by a vote of 58 percent, with the same range of options, on September 7, 1983. All three acts of self-determination were observed and reported on by United Nations observation teams.<sup>6</sup> The Micronesian states' free association relationship will assure continued economic and security links with the U.S. and a special political relationship somewhat akin to that between the Cook Islands and New Zealand.

The U.S. obviously also has a strong interest in close and friendly relations with the island states of the South Pacific, in the success of regional institutions (although it participates only in the South Pacific Commission and the South Pacific Conference), and in the stability and economic well-being of the region.

U.S. direct economic interests are less significant and relate primarily to the welfare and development of the American territories and of Micronesia, and to non-discriminatory access to marine resources in a manner that also serves the legitimate interests of the island states.

In contrast to the foregoing, U.S. security interests in the Pacific islands are in some degree indirect in that they are largely derivative of interests and objectives elsewhere. Aside from the fundamental interest of the security of Hawaii, Guam, American Samoa and Micronesia, the primary U.S. defense interest within the region is that of secure lines of communication through the Pacific -- air and sea -- to our friends and allies in Asia, to Australia and New Zealand, to the Indian Ocean, and to island states with which we have ties

of friendship. <sup>7</sup> Secretary of Defense Caspar Weinberger recently summed up U.S. security interests in another way.

"Five of the seven defense agreements to which the United States is a signatory are located in the Asian/Pacific region. They include bilateral treaties with Japan, Korea and the Philippines; the Manila Pact which adds Thailand to our treaty partners; and, of course, the ANZUS Treaty. From the United States perspective, each of these agreements is more important today than on the day we signed it. United States interests in the Pacific, already vital to maintaining our security, are becoming even more important. For example, our trade with our Asian-Pacific neighbors -- valued at over 137 billion dollars last year alone -- now accounts for 28 percent of all U.S. foreign trade, more than our trade with any other region. Free world economies depend increasingly upon essential raw materials and trade which travel the vital Pacific sea-lanes. Thus, the security of the United States has become increasingly interdependent with the security of each of its Pacific allies." <sup>8</sup>

Discussion of these interests, of related American objectives, and of operational requirements can best be divided into those that relate primarily to the islands north of the equator, and to those that relate to the islands of the South Pacific.

The importance of the northern Pacific islands is manifest. Guam is a politically secure and strategically located island under American sovereignty. From bases on Guam, U.S. air and sea power can support allies and friends in Asia or meet a Soviet thrust into the North Pacific. Distances in the Western Pacific area, the nature of the Soviet threat, the variety of U.S. commitments, the scope of forces required to meet a variety of possible contingencies, the small size of Guam itself, and the military necessity of dispersing forces assure that Guam alone cannot suffice to support a U.S. defense presence in the Western Pacific. Thus Guam is only one element of a broader commitment of U.S. forces to Japan, the Philippines, and Korea.

The U.S. also has leased land in the Northern Mariana Islands, mainly on Tinian, for possible future use by the U.S. Air Force and the other services. Any future reactivation of the World War II airfields on Tinian would complement bases on nearby Guam and could be of critical importance should the U.S. lose access to major facilities elsewhere in the Western Pacific. Absent that unlikely contingency, a future Guam-Tinian-Saipan complex of facilities would continue to be



only one element in the U.S. defense presence in the Pacific and East Asia mentioned above.

The Micronesian islands and Guam have strategic value in still another sense. In peacetime they lie to the south of major sea and air lanes across the North Pacific. However, in any Pacific war scenario involving the Soviets, U.S. lines of communication would shift to the south and run through or near the Micronesian islands; ships and aircraft would attempt to move beyond the range of Soviet attack aircraft operating out of bases in the Kuril Islands and on the Soviet Asian mainland. For this reason, but also because of the threat that would be posed to Hawaii and to areas south of the equator, a primary U.S. objective in the political status negotiations with the Micronesian governments has been an arrangement that assures no adversary of the United States or of its allies would have access to these islands for military purposes. The UN Trusteeship Agreement provides such an assurance while it remains in force. The commonwealth status chosen by the people of the Northern Mariana Islands in their 1975 act of self-determination also provides that assurance for those islands after the trusteeship is terminated. Similarly, the free association relationship with Palau, the Federated States of Micronesia, and with the Marshall Islands will provide for U.S. responsibility for the defense and security of these states -- and thus assurance of denial of military access to potential adversaries.

Unlike the Northern Marianas' commonwealth status, the Compact of Free Association with the Micronesian states, when fully in effect with termination of the UN Trusteeship Agreement, will establish three new sovereign states in a political relationship with the U.S. that has no precise precedent either in international practice or in U.S. constitutional law and will provide to the Micronesian governments authority and responsibility for their internal and foreign affairs. The U.S. also is committed to provide approximately US\$2.2 billion in grant assistance to the three states during the first 15 years of the relationship, with adjustment of that amount to take into account inflation. The Micronesian states may become independent, or seek a closer relationship with the U.S., by terminating the free association relationship with the U.S. through a plebiscite demonstrating that such was the freely expressed will of the people.

The defense and security provisions of the Compact of Free Association with the three states provide that:

--the U.S. undertakes to defend the three states as it would the United States and its citizens for a minimum period

of 15 years in the cases of the Marshall Islands and the Federated States of Micronesia, and 50 years in the case of Palau;

--during those same periods the U.S. would have the right, after consultation, to disapprove any action by any of the governments which in the U.S. view compromised the U.S. ability to provide such defense; and,

--the U.S. has the right to foreclose use of the territory of any of the three states for military purposes by any third nation. That right extends indefinitely in each state until otherwise mutually agreed. In return (after any termination of the time-limited defense provisions mentioned above) the U.S. would guarantee the defense of each of the states on a basis comparable to that which underlies U.S. mutual security agreements with its closest allies.

The U.S. also has concluded with these three Micronesian governments agreements covering specific military requirements.

--In the Palau Islands, a Military Use and Operating Rights Agreement provides the U.S. the right to make contingency use of various areas, after consultation with the Government of Palau. These rights, which will run for 50 years, provide for contingency access to anchorage rights in Palau's main harbor and use of a 40-acre nearby land area for support facilities; for contingency joint usage of Palau's two main airfields (including their improvement and small adjacent areas for support purposes); for contingency use of 2000 acres for logistics installations; and for periodic access to areas on Babelthuap island for occasional training exercises, after consultation with the Palau Government in each instance.

--Arrangements have been concluded for continued use of the Kwajalein Missile Range facility in the Marshall Islands for up to 30 years -- a peacetime requirement. There is no wartime role for Kwajalein.

--No basing or other military arrangements, other than the ability to transit the area, have been sought for any of the islands in the Federated States of Micronesia (Yap, Truk, Ponape, and Kosrae). There is agreement on the continued presence of the Coast Guard station on Yap Island.

Contrary to a current Soviet "disinformation" campaign and speculation by some writers, the U.S. does not plan in any contingency to establish a nuclear submarine base in Palau, nor to store nuclear, chemical, or biological weapons in Palau (in

fact the U.S. has renounced biological weapons). Such usage is neither politically practical nor militarily necessary and most certainly is not contemplated; these and other allegations about military use of Palau have been accurately described as "tendentious rubbish" by the American Ambassador to the UN Trusteeship Council.<sup>9</sup> The Government of Palau is fully aware of the foregoing from frequent discussions with the U.S. Government. Indeed it is probable that most of the contingency rights provided by the agreement with Palau will never be exercised; they are intended primarily for contingencies which hopefully will never materialize. One such contingency could be loss of access to facilities in the Philippines. Under such circumstances the strategic importance of not only Palau, but also of Guam and the Northern Marianas, would increase as possible sites for the relocation of some U.S. military operations presently at Subic Bay and Clark Air Base. However, a combination of cost factors, strategic considerations, Palau's small size, and the narrow range of contingency rights in Palau assures that most military operations and facilities in the Philippines could not be duplicated in Palau. In the event of war, the U.S. might need to utilize contingency rights in Palau to provide protection of sea lanes running north-south between the Philippines and Palau -- if access to the Indian Ocean through the South China Sea had become too risky and if some of the straits through the Indonesian archipelago remain open.

At this writing (September, 1983), it is of course by no means certain that the above political and defense arrangements will be implemented. The Palauans must now devise an acceptable method of reconciling provisions of their constitution which conflict with the Compact of Free Association approved by the people of Palau in their February 10, 1983 plebiscite. The constitution presently provides for a nuclear-free Palau, including prohibition of access to Palau by nuclear-powered ships and the transit of nuclear weapons. These provisions are inconsistent with the defense authority and responsibilities of the U.S. in a free association relationship. In the same plebiscite the Palauan people, by a majority of 52 percent, did agree to set aside these nuclear restraints in a procedure provided for by their constitution. However, that was inadequate because the constitutional procedures require a 75 percent majority vote to eliminate these restrictions. The Palauan people do of course have the right to declare their land, air and sea space "nuclear-free," but they must choose between that and free association with the United States. Unlike independence, a free association relationship with the United States is not a matter of right to Palau and cannot be unilaterally defined by Palau. It must be based on mutually acceptable principles and serve the interests

of both parties. In these circumstances it is difficult to envisage implementing the free association relationship with Palau until the above conflict is resolved.

Although the strategic importance of the northern Pacific islands relates in large measure to lines of communication to Asia and to the Indian Ocean, that of the South Pacific relates to access to Australia and New Zealand -- but also in certain contingencies to the Indian Ocean or to Pacific islands states. In peacetime, most ship movements from the Pacific to the Indian Ocean thread their way through the many straits of the Indonesian archipelago or the Strait of Malacca. However, the Soviets now have an ability to interdict shipping through the South China Sea from bases in Vietnam and to close the Indonesian archipelago straits and the Strait of Malacca with mines. Should these contingencies eventuate in a regional or global conflict, Pacific lines of communication (especially from Hawaii and the U.S. West Coast) would shift to the South Pacific, the Tasman Sea, the Bass Strait, and thence westward across the Great Australian Bight to the Indian Ocean. A shorter but more difficult alternative route to the Indian Ocean would be through the South Pacific and the shallow Torres Strait between Papua New Guinea and the north of Australia.

In any case, the security of the three ANZUS partners requires freedom of movement through the South Pacific with respect to their own immediate defense but also in connection with any threat in the Indian Ocean or the South Pacific. As in the North Pacific, this interest is best served by the absence of bases from which hostile forces can operate against allied ships and aircraft. It does not require American bases in the South Pacific and none are sought. This interest does require that allied ships and aircraft be able to refuel and replenish within the area and to conduct surveillance of hostile submarines operating in the South Pacific. For the most part U.S. requirements can be satisfied from American Samoa. Moreover, assuming that the ANZUS allies will stand together in any conflict in the Pacific area -- actual or threatened -- much of the surveillance activity probably would be conducted by New Zealand and Australian aircraft and ships.

Fortunately, the possibility that the Soviet Union will acquire military bases in the South Pacific seems very remote. However, Soviet submarines already do operate in the area. Related to that development, Soviet oceanographic research vessels, some of them disguised as fishing trawlers, conduct extensive research relating to seabed mapping, ocean currents, water temperatures, and other data important for submarine operations. To the extent peacetime Soviet submarine operations in the South Pacific become a major potential threat

to the ANZUS partners, there will be a corollary requirement to step up the tracking and surveillance of these submarines. In that context, ANZUS tracking aircraft and ships benefit from access to ports and airfields in the South Pacific islands.

None of the foregoing requires defense treaties between the U.S. and South Pacific island states. Although some island governments from time to time have expressed an interest in ANZUS membership or in separate defense treaties with one of the ANZUS partners, it has been pointed out at those times that to all practical purposes they are already "umbrellaed" by ANZUS. Moreover, in the author's view, any military attack on any state within the region by an external power would represent a direct challenge to the vital interests of the ANZUS partners and would require a response. The South Pacific island states thus derive the security benefits without the corollary obligations of the ANZUS Treaty. In this connection, it is important to recall that the ANZUS security commitment would be triggered not only by an attack on the metropole of any of the three allies, but also by an attack on the forces or territory of any of the signatories within the Pacific area. As a hypothetical example, the security obligations of all three governments could be triggered by an attack on the forces of one responding to an attack or the threat of an attack on an island state.

In addition, the Treaties of Friendship between the United States and Kiribati and Tuvalu provide for consultations in the event of a perceived threat and that bases will not be provided to third parties without prior consultations with the U.S. However, the main purpose of these treaties (as well as those with the Cook Islands and with New Zealand on behalf of the Tokelau Islands) was not to establish a defense relationship, but rather to clarify territorial sovereignty by relinquishing shadowy U.S. claims to various islands. All four treaties were negotiated during the Carter Administration and were ratified during the Reagan Administration (1983).

The most controversial element of U.S. military operations in the South Pacific relates to broader nuclear concerns. The ability of U.S. forces -- especially the Navy -- to exercise with our allies in peacetime, and to support them or other friends in the area in any contingency, depends on free movement through the South Pacific. Familiarity with the area's waters is an obvious necessity, and the use of ports and airfields is desirable. In peacetime, shore leave by ships' crews is an important morale factor.

If South Pacific governments were to determine that nuclear-propelled or nuclear armed ships (and aircraft) should

be excluded from their territory, the ability of U.S. forces to respond to contingencies would be severely hampered. Nearly half of the U.S. Navy is nuclear-propelled and, as a matter of firm principle, the U.S. neither confirms nor denies the presence of nuclear weapons on any military ship or aircraft. To do otherwise would only pinpoint targets for an adversary. Any requirement that the U.S. assert the presence or non-presence of nuclear weapons on an aircraft or a ship thus has the practical effect of denying its entry.

If none of our ships carried nuclear weapons there would be no counter balance to the Soviet nuclear capability in the Pacific and Indian Ocean areas. This one-sided nuclear capability would generate in others the perception of superior strength and thus the attendant political influence which might be gained by that perception. This is a peacetime implication. Soviet perception of superiority could also lower the threshold for conflict.

For these reasons it is imperative that the United States Navy maintain a deterrent nuclear capability which makes it manifestly clear to the Soviet Union that use of their Pacific-oriented nuclear forces, especially at sea, would result in risks which far outweigh any conceivable gain.

From the Pacific islanders' viewpoint there are also significant and legitimate concerns and understandable emotions directed against nuclear testing, the dumping of nuclear waste, and the basing of nuclear weapons within the region. These sentiments are summed up in various proposals for a South Pacific Nuclear Free Zone. The U.S. does not intend to dump nuclear waste, to conduct nuclear tests, or to base or store nuclear weapons in the South Pacific. Indeed, nuclear waste dumping is prohibited by current U.S. legislation. However, unless carefully crafted, a South Pacific Nuclear Free Zone could cripple the ability of U.S. forces to exercise in the South Pacific with our ANZUS allies and to transit the South Pacific to Australia, New Zealand and the Indian Ocean in war or peace.

The latter point was recognized by the heads of governments of the Pacific islands states, and of Australia and New Zealand, during the August, 1983 Canberra meeting of the South Pacific Forum. The Forum, after considering an Australian proposal for establishment of a South Pacific Nuclear Free Zone, affirmed in its communique:

\*...that in further addressing the zone proposal it would be important to uphold the principles of freedom of navigation and overflight as provided in international law

and the treaty obligations of some Forum members. It recognized the sovereign right of governments to make their own decisions on their alliance and defense requirements including access to their ports and airfields by the vessels and aircraft of other countries." 10

The potential utility of nuclear weapons free zones is stated in Article VII of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty which acknowledges the right of groups of states to conclude regional treaties in order to assure the absence of nuclear weapons on their territory. The United States has supported the establishment of regional nuclear weapons free zones under appropriate conditions and when consistent with certain criteria based on UN resolutions:

--The initiative for the creation of the zone should come from the states in the region concerned;

--All states whose participation is deemed important should participate in the zone;

--The zone arrangement should provide for adequate verification of compliance with its provisions;

--The establishment of the zone should not disturb existing security arrangements to the detriment of regional and international security;

--The zone arrangement should effectively prohibit its parties from developing or otherwise possessing any nuclear explosive device for whatever purpose;

--The establishment of a zone should not affect the existing rights of its parties under international law to grant or deny to other states transit privileges within internal waters, including port calls and overflights; and,

--The zone arrangement should not seek to impose restrictions on the exercise of rights recognized under international law, particularly the principle of freedom of navigation of the high seas, in international airspace, and through straits used for international navigation, and the right of innocent passage through territorial seas.

In the event that regional governments were to seek implementation of a South Pacific Nuclear Free Zone, the U.S. Government's attitude would be based in large measure on the proposal's compatibility with the above criteria.

Another matter, that of U.S. refusal to sign the Law of the Sea Convention, provides a significant irritant in U.S. relationships with a region where national interests are closely linked to marine and seabed resources. However, this controversy need not impact directly on U.S. defense interests. The U.S. opposes only those provisions of the Convention which relate to exploitation of the resources of the seabed. The U.S. endorses all other elements of the Convention, including provisions relating to exclusive economic zones, and to straits and archipelagos. These provisions reflect existing international law and practice regarding navigation and overflights and thus do not represent inappropriate new restraints on freedom of movement of ships and aircraft. 11

All of the foregoing addresses U.S. security interests and objectives or principles supportive of those interests. The expanding Soviet threat to these and allied interests has required increases in U.S. and allied forces in the Asian and Pacific regions. However, in the Pacific islands those interests generally still translate into a low-profile U.S. military presence. No U.S. ships, aircraft, or forces are based in the South Pacific islands, nor are there any in the North Pacific islands other than on Guam and in Hawaii (as noted earlier, Kwajalein is a test facility without combat capability). In 1982, there were only fourteen South Pacific island port calls by seven U.S. Navy ships. While the numbers may vary from year to year, it seems unlikely, at least for the foreseeable future, they will become significantly greater. Moreover, all port calls have been of the "good will" variety, and some were for disaster relief operations. As noted earlier, advances in military technology over the past 20 years have largely eliminated the need for the many "stepping stone" bases that were essential in the Pacific campaigns of World War II.

Other U.S. military activity in the South Pacific has been limited to a few sales of military equipment to the defense forces of Fiji and Papua New Guinea, assistance in arranging for the deployment of Fiji's contribution to peacekeeping forces in the Middle East, and training of a few members of the defense forces of Fiji and Papua New Guinea. The U.S. takes the view that Australia's and New Zealand's close relationships and particular interests in the South Pacific -- including defense cooperation -- suggest that these two countries play the lead role in that area to the extent that island states seek external cooperation. The latter principle, however, does pose questions about a sensitive aspect of regional security: that of the internal security of states within the region. Thus far, among the independent states, only Vanuatu has



experienced a significant internal security problem -- and that hopefully was an isolated incident resulting from the unique processes that brought those islands to independence. The future may be less kind. Ethnic mix, land issues, and political emotions in New Caledonia provide an explosive environment for that territory's future political evolution to probable independence. Elsewhere there are other potential causes for internal strife: language and tribal differences, pressures for separatism or political fragmentation, ethnic conflict, or simple economic deprivation. Fortunately, ideological conflict is absent in most areas. Only three island states, Fiji, Papua New Guinea and Tonga, maintain defense forces capable of coping with significant internal conflict; others rely on small and lightly-armed civil police forces or (in the case of New Caledonia and French Polynesia) the presence of the French military.

Aside from its responsibilities in its own territories there is at present no need for a U.S. internal security role in the Pacific islands. It is more appropriate that the island states, especially in the South Pacific, rely on cooperation among themselves when external assistance is required -- as occurred when Papua New Guinea provided security forces to Vanuatu in the immediate aftermath of Vanuatu's independence.

The above premise assumes no foreign involvement in an insurrection, and it is possible that situations could arise that would be beyond the ability of local or neighboring state forces to handle. In such contingencies, a South Pacific government might turn to one or several of the ANZUS governments for assistance. The response presumably would depend on the circumstances and could pose difficult issues. The governments appealed to would have to weigh the implications of involvement against broader interests, and the consequences of not assisting a beleaguered friendly government. Hopefully such a contingency and the related issues will not arise.

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The foregoing addresses U.S. security interests largely in isolation from political interests and without adequately assessing the political and economic environment -- at best a risky and incomplete point of departure. While perhaps it is stating the obvious, the security interests of the U.S. and of its Pacific allies are best served by a regional political and economic environment that provides to the peoples of the area the security and stability essential to their political, economic, and social development, and that serves their own respective national interests. Put another way, the

fundamental shared national interest of Pacific islands states and of the U.S., Australia and New Zealand is freedom from military aggression or pressure, and the ability to focus resources on national needs. To the extent that there is generally a shared perception of common or compatible security interests, the defense interests of the United States are well served.

The above perception and a corresponding consensus as to how mutual interests are best protected seem to prevail at this time, but cannot be taken for granted. Governments, nations, and peoples deprived of political stability, of the essential needs of life, or of fulfillment of legitimate aspirations are likely to be short-sighted with respect to "over-the-horizon" potential threats. Fiscal or other desperation can make governments and peoples susceptible to solutions or blandishments potentially damaging to the interests of their neighbors and to the region's stability and security.

Equally, island nations whose development or even economic survival may be dependent upon the resources of the surrounding seas, or who perceive their environment threatened by hazards such as nuclear waste, are unlikely to be sympathetic to the interests of those whom they perceive as threatening their own immediate national interests.

In these circumstances, U.S. security interests also are well served by policies that reinforce the region's potential for development and the effectiveness of regional institutions that can provide cohesion and economies of scale, and that display sensitivity toward the modest but vital interests and needs of island states. The interests of the region and of the ANZUS allies would appear to be further served by a final elimination of the remaining psychological and other barriers to full integration of the North Pacific islands with the regional life of the South Pacific.

The Micronesian states, for a variety of historical and political reasons, have not participated fully in the regional institutions of the area (with the exception of the South Pacific Conference), but will be able to do so upon termination of the UN trusteeship. Effective Micronesian participation in such institutions as the South Pacific Forum and the South Pacific Bureau for Economic Cooperation will strengthen these organizations through an enlarged two-way flow of skills and other resources. In turn, Micronesia stands to benefit from the infusion of ideas and concepts tested elsewhere, and from participation in regional decision-making processes. The region as a whole would benefit from enhanced economies of scale in such fields as education, health services,

communications, fisheries, transportation, marketing, and research. Above all, the voice of the region and its influence on others would be more cohesive and effective.

Without challenging Australia's and New Zealand's relationships with the South Pacific, the U.S. also must continue to consider how it might better contribute to the development needs of the South Pacific and to the strengthening of regional institutions. The security and well-being of the U.S. territories and of the Micronesian states are directly linked to those of their near neighbors and cannot be dealt with in isolation. Similarly, Australia and New Zealand might consider whether their broader interests in the region might be better served by more active relationships with the islands north of the equator and by working with their island neighbors to integrate Micronesia more fully into the life of the region.

## FOOTNOTES

1. John C. Dorrance is a Counselor in the Senior Foreign Service of the United States Department of State, and a specialist in Australia, New Zealand, and Pacific islands affairs. He has served on diplomatic assignments in Vietnam, Fiji, Australia, Micronesia, Jamaica, and Germany. In Washington Mr. Dorrance has been assigned to positions dealing with U.S. policy planning, United Nations affairs, the Middle East, Micronesia, and the Southwest Pacific. A graduate of Georgetown University's School of Foreign Service and of the National War College, he also has an M.S. degree from George Washington University, and was the first U.S. Foreign Service Officer to complete Pacific islands area specialization studies at the University of Hawaii. Between 1978-1979, he served on the faculty of the National Defense University in Washington, D.C. He currently is the Director of the Department of State's Office of Australia and New Zealand Affairs.

The analyses provided in "U.S. Security Interests in the Pacific Islands" are based on the author's expertise and involvement in many of the issues discussed -- but also on 1982 discussions with other U.S. officials in the Department of State, the Department of Defense, and at U.S. Pacific Command headquarters in Honolulu (CINCPAC).

2. Data provided to author in December, 1982 by the Defense Intelligence Agency, Department of Defense, Washington, D.C.
3. Chile and the UK also possess small territories in the South Pacific: Easter Island and Pitcairn Island.
4. Immediately after independence there was a separatist insurrection in Vanuatu with some associated bloodshed.
5. For a more complete discussion of U.S. interests, objectives, and policy in the Pacific islands, see: John C. Dorrance. Oceania and the United States, National Security Monograph Series 80-6, National Defense University Research Directorate, Washington, D.C. 1980.
6. As discussed elsewhere in this paper, conflicts between Palau's constitution and the Compact of Free Association with the United States remain to be resolved. Approval of the free association relationship by the U.S. Congress is an early and essential next step. Following Congressional approval, arrangements will be necessary for termination, in the United Nations context, of the Trusteeship Agreement

entered into in 1947 by the UN Security Council and the United States. Pending termination of that agreement, the United States will continue to be legally responsible for the administration of Micronesia.

7. For a detailed discussion of Pacific lines of communication see: Robert A. Brand, Patricia K. Hymson, and Hans H. Indorf, Editors. Lines of Communication and Security, National Defense University 1981 Pacific Symposium Proceedings, National Defense University, Fort Lesley J. McNair, Washington, D.C., 1981.
8. From a speech by the Honorable Caspar Weinberger, U.S. Secretary of Defense, before the National Press Club, Canberra, Australia, November 5, 1982.
9. Following are some examples of Soviet disinformation. Moscow TASS in English on October 25, 1982, asserted: "The Pentagon is making plans for turning the Micronesian Republic of Palau into an unsinkable aircraft carrier. It wants to establish on the strategic Pacific island of Palau a big American air base, installations for servicing nuclear submarines and a center for the Rapid Deployment Force ... and a site for storing nuclear, chemical and bacteriological weapons, as well as for testing such weapons." Moscow's Pravda newspaper on December 17, 1982, alleged that "Washington is preparing to build the biggest naval base in the region on the Palau Islands -- it will occupy 30 percent of the entire territory of Palau ... More than 32,000 acres ... is to be used as storage dumps for nuclear warheads, while Palau's main port is to become the main base in the region for nuclear submarines ... Here too the CIA has chosen a secret base for itself for training special groups for 'combatting the guerilla movement.'" In a statement before a Special Session of the United Nations Trusteeship Council on December 20, 1982, American Ambassador William Sherman correctly categorized these and similar allegations as being "groundless and polemical accusations" and "tendentious rubbish."
10. From the Communique issued at the conclusion of the 14th meeting of the South Pacific Forum between August 29-30, 1983, in Canberra, Australia. Participants included the heads of government of Australia, the Cook Islands, Federated States of Micronesia (as an observer), Fiji, Kiribati, Nauru, New Zealand, Niue, Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands, Tuvalu, Vanuatu and Western Samoa. Tonga was represented by its Minister for Foreign Affairs and Defense. The Australian proposal for a South Pacific Nuclear Free Zone envisaged the banning of nuclear testing,

the dumping or storage of nuclear waste, and the basing or storage of nuclear weapons in the region. The Forum agreed to consider further this proposal at its next meeting in 1984.

11. Yet another irritant in U.S. relations with Pacific islands governments is the U.S. position on migratory species of fish (mainly tuna). The U.S. holds that an international body should exercise jurisdiction with respect to management of commercial fishing of these species. Pacific islands governments (and many more) maintain that they have jurisdiction when these fish are within their economic zones. The U.S. and Pacific islands governments are in a dialogue aimed at a practical resolution of this issue.