

Miriam Hughes
Ambassador Designate to Micronesia
Senate Foreign Relations Committee
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Madam Chairwoman and Members of the Committee, it is a privilege to appear before you today to discuss my nomination to serve as U.S. Ambassador to the Federated States of Micronesia (FSM). It is also an honor to introduce my daughter, Jordana Hughes Tynan, who came from New York to be with me on this momentous day. Jordana accompanied me on all my overseas assignments, which was not always easy for a child. She made many sacrifices and adjustments on my behalf.

During a 29-year career in the Foreign Service, I have learned, worked and grown through assignments at our U.S. posts in Mexico City, Santo Domingo, Quito, Bangkok, London and Thessaloniki. My specialty has been consular management, but I additionally sought broader experience. In Bangkok, I monitored and reported on conditions in UN refugee camps for Cambodians and Vietnamese. The post I headed in Thessaloniki, Greece focused on efforts to promote U.S. business opportunities and analyze the human rights mosaic in the Balkans.

In my current assignment at the U.S. Mission to the United Nations, I head a section that is dedicated to the full range of economic, social and humanitarian affairs that consume more than 70 percent of the UN regular budget. The global issues that we debate and negotiate particularly concern developing countries. If confirmed, I would look forward wholeheartedly to leading our efforts in Micronesia to implement in practice key objectives that we discuss conceptually at the UN, including sustainable development, good governance and environmental protection.

On a map, the FSM appear as specks of far-flung islands in the vast Central Pacific Ocean. Although this nation is tiny and scattered, its impact is significant. We share a deep connection. Micronesia's 600 islands encompass a total area of just 270 square miles. It is one of the smallest countries in the world. Nevertheless, it has sovereignty over more than a million square miles of ocean in a strategic region. The United States has committed to defend Micronesia as if it were part of our own territory. Micronesians serve in the U.S. military at twice the per capita rate of Americans, and many have made the ultimate sacrifice for freedom in Iraq and Afghanistan. The friendship of this nation is vital, particularly as we expand our engagement in the Pacific to meet today's transnational challenges.

If confirmed by the Senate, I would look forward to working with the Members of this Committee and others in the Congress who seek to invigorate our relationship with Micronesia across a range of interests. Although an ocean separates us, this recently independent nation has a special place in the hearts of Americans. Our ties go back over centuries.

In the 1800's, American whalers and missionaries entered this region. The American author Jack London found inspiration for some of his most gripping tales in the remote Pacific islands. His stories of voyages and adventures capture the translucent beauty of the islands as well as the hazards of typhoons, disease and poverty. The inhabitants who London brought to life demonstrate extraordinary skill in indigenous methods of navigation. They are ingenious, loyal and resilient. These are people who we want to keep as firm friends.

Soon after the Second World War and following severe bombing of some of the occupied islands of Micronesia, the United Nations established the Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands under the administration of the United States. Although discontinued in 1991, the trusteeship system remains enshrined in the UN Charter as a means to promote peace, progressive development and eventual self-government. Under American tutelage, Micronesia fulfilled these aims. The FSM adopted a constitution in 1979. The nation emerged as a sovereign democracy in 1986. A Compact of Free Association with the United States helped Micronesia make a smooth transition. This month, Micronesians chose their seventh President in a free and fair electoral process.

We have entered a challenging, new phase of U.S.-Micronesian relations. To promote self-reliance, the U.S. Congress approved an Amended Compact of Free Association, which commenced in 2004. The Micronesians themselves participated in Compact negotiations, and they help review its annual performance. The Amended Compact targets U.S. resources in key areas that are building blocks for economic self-sufficiency, including education, health care, infrastructure, environmental protection and private sector development. Compact aid will decrease progressively every year and transfer to a capitalized trust fund, which is intended to ensure Micronesia's transition to economic independence in 2024.

The U.S. Embassy in Kolonia has a special responsibility to work with the Department of Interior to ensure that this Compact is well implemented. Strong leadership and management skills are essential. The Embassy needs to coordinate with some 40 other U.S. Government agencies - many of them legacies from the days of the Trust Territory - whose programs continue to touch every aspect of Micronesian life. Respect and partnership will be the cornerstones of our success.

From my experience as a Foreign Service consular manager in some of our largest and most complex overseas consular sections, I learned to improve efficiency and accountability based on collaborative strategies. One must engage and train the participants, ensuring that they become part of the process, buy into the goals and indeed refine and adapt them and make them their own. Once engaged, they will dedicate their best efforts, teaching a leader in return and finding creative, new ways to achieve mutual objectives.

If I am confirmed, I will devote my energies to fostering relationships of equality and pragmatism with our Micronesian friends. I would also strengthen cooperation with

regional and multilateral partners and civil society representatives. Such a comprehensive approach must be based upon a clear vision of how to nurture a sustainable future in a small island nation that is isolated and potentially vulnerable. To be effective at the United Nations, one learns to listen carefully and to focus on priorities. The majority of UN members are developing countries. They teach us the paramount importance of respect for diversity and principles of national ownership. At the same time, the U.S. has led efforts to establish global acceptance of the responsibility of governments to meet the needs of their own people by creating an enabling architecture for a just rule of law and growth that is stimulated by economic freedom.

Madam Chairwoman and Members of the Committee, it would be a profound honor to represent the President and people of the United States of America in the Federated States of Micronesia. If I am confirmed, I would work diligently to promote friendship and a comprehensive partnership to help build capacity in a strategic region. You can be assured of my full cooperation with the U.S. Congress. I will be happy to answer your questions.