

INTERVIEW OF HARLAN CLEVELAND

by Howard P. Willens

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- Willens: Harlan Cleveland served as Assistant Secretary of State during the period from 1961 to 1965. Mr. Cleveland, thank you for agreeing to be interviewed. I guess it would be most helpful if you begin by telling me how you came to be Assistant Secretary of State and at what point Micronesia appeared on your agenda.
- Cleveland: The origin was slightly peculiar. I got into politics in upstate New York when I was Dean of the Maxwell School at Syracuse University and I was Chairman of Citizens for Kennedy for Central New York area up there around Syracuse. So in that sense I was qualified by loyalty. I think I was half a vote at the Los Angeles convention which selected Jack Kennedy to run. But more relevantly, Kennedy started hiring all sorts of friends. Dean Rusk offered me a job in the Rockefeller Foundation, but I decided that I was having more fun spending their money than giving it away would be. And Chester Bowles and George Ball and others. Adlai Stevenson I knew somewhat, although I had never worked in one of his campaigns. When he finally swallowed the fact that he wasn't going to be either the President or Secretary of State, and accepted the position of Ambassador to the U.N., one of the conditions he made was that he would get to nominate the person who would be his backstop in Washington. The International Organizations Bureau (IO) had a number of functions, but the most visible and the biggest workload was providing the instructions for the U.S. Mission to the U.N., which had five people in the rank of Ambassador and was at that time probably more active than it's ever been, except it's going to have to be that active from now on because the U.N. is becoming more the center of things.
- Willens: Did you have any background in United Nations affairs before you came into the government?
- Cleveland: Well, I had written and spoken on international affairs in general and I had always been interested in international institutions as a subject. I never taught international organization as such. My academic background was more in political science and public administration, but I had gravitated to the Maxwell School because of my interest in how the government works and derived from that my interest in how the world works.
- Willens: Who was in the U.N. office when you came in as Assistant Secretary—the staff people that you looked to develop the draft position papers and so forth?
- Cleveland: Well, I inherited the staff that was there already. But I quickly found that if you maneuvered skillfully enough you could get almost anybody in the foreign service. So I set my aim on several people to join me from outside and from inside. My two chief deputies after a while were one senior foreign service officer who had to move on, but his successor as the senior foreign service officer was Joe Sisco, who was also my successor in the job and later became Undersecretary for Political Affairs, which is about as high as you can go in the foreign service. And my other deputy was Dick Gardner, a lawyer and professor at Columbia and with Coudert Brothers, of counsel as they say, who was younger than I was. I was only 42, I guess, at the time. A year younger than Kennedy was. But I found in the International Organization Affairs Bureau several absolutely first-rate people. When we moved Sisco from being head of the U.N. political affairs office to be my senior deputy, Bill Buffum turned up as the obvious choice from within to promote into that job. He

later became the top American appointee in the U.N. Secretariat for a good many years before he retired. And we had an old bureaucratic warhorse, and a very good one, named Walter Kutsnehgen.

Willens: I haven't seen that name in the documents.

Cleveland: I think he was an Austrian, or refugee, but very good and a deep student of international economic organizations. He had followed them for many years and was very useful on that account. We also did some good recruiting. Kennedy had a policy of wanting to recruit more blacks into the foreign service and other career services from which they had been largely excluded. We found a young man who had been teaching about the U.N. and so on as a young assistant professor and brought him in. That was Don McHenry, who later on went up into the Mission and succeeded Andy Young as Ambassador to the U.N. At least in the latter stages during the period I was there, which was almost five years, he was our expert on the Trust Territory, among other things.

Willens: I know Don McHenry.

Cleveland: Then you probably know the book he's written and so forth.

Willens: I did review the book with some interest. It was, as you may recall, largely critical of U.S. policy with respect to Micronesia. I have not yet interviewed Don in connection with this project. His views may well have changed over time.

Cleveland: You should see him about this period because his recollection both of the documents and the specific moves and so on would be much closer to the action than I was.

Willens: We talked to Mr. Gleysteen, who was there in the Bureau after you left and he said the same thing about Don McHenry. Did you come in early in the spring of 1961 or did there take some time for you to go through the confirmation process?

Cleveland: No, I came in the third day after the inauguration as a consultant. Of course, I wasn't even nominated let alone confirmed. But I guess we weren't as careful in those days. I sat in the office that I was going to sit in and so forth. But actually I wasn't nominated for almost a month because my nomination was being opposed by your former boss, Bob Kennedy.

Willens: What was the basis for that opposition?

Cleveland: The basis was apparently reports from the Kennedy campaign operatives, particularly one strange character in our Citizens for Kennedy office. Anyway they apparently got the impression that I wasn't sufficiently loyal or doing the right things about the campaign. I did have a very different idea about how the campaign should be run and particularly about what they should be saying about foreign policy. And at one point when I was driving Bob Kennedy over from, I can't remember where it was, to Syracuse, for a baked bean supper we were going to have for the campaign, I had heard his speech he had just given before he got into my car. And I thought it wasn't quite what I had already recommended. I had sent a long memo about foreign policy. So in the middle of a sentence he leans over and turns the transistor radio full blast. I said to myself: "This is strange. I'm busting my gut trying to get his brother elected President, at least he could be polite." So I never quite understood that personality. Arthur Schlesinger and others said he became a great liberal later on, but...

Willens: There's a lot of literature on that subject. One of the reasons I ask about when you reported for duty is that one write-up that I've seen suggests that there were many important foreign policy issues on your agenda during those first few years. The write-up

I'm specifically referring to mentions the Belgian Congo. What were the three or four major foreign policy issues that you recall emphasizing during the first few years?

Cleveland: Well, several of them were issues up in and about the U.N. We, of course, had a gladiator up there who started out by being better known in the world than the President was and who was also treated as a member of the Cabinet. So I and my staff were his staff for providing him the background, even when he went to meetings on Berlin or other subjects that weren't really on the U.N.'s agenda. This gave me a hunting license to intervene in the internal affairs of the other bureaus very effectively because we had the client who needed the answer tomorrow. In the U.N. context, the Congo and Angola and of course the Bay of Pigs came along in April, and again that didn't start as a U.N. issue, but the CIA had cleverly contrived to get the operation started on the day that a previous Cuban item was to come up on the agenda of the General Assembly in which Cuba was accusing us of wanting to invade them and so on. So they kind of missed the boat on that. And they provided us some wrong information, which Adlai spouted on the floor of the General Assembly and the cover blew off inside of 24 hours and it was a very embarrassing moment for Stevenson, perhaps the most embarrassing one he had. So I personally spent really most of my time on U.N. politics, I suppose, in those first few months. But in addition to that we were working quite hard on other initiatives and moves in some of the other international organizations. We started the World Weatherwatch, that didn't get started until 1963 but we were talking about it for long before that. That's perhaps the most successful single piece of international cooperation there is, which is why you never hear about it, except you see the result of it on television every night. And we were trying to support the World Health Organization on some important activities. We gave them a replica of the great National Library of Medicine, you know, that was at that time the most computerized library in the world probably. And we were fighting about UNESCO, then as now, and trying to dump the Director General of UNESCO. We belonged at that time to 53 international organizations, the U.S. government did. And we went to about 700 intergovernmental conferences a year. Part of my job was to supervise the relations with those organizations and my desk was sort of the final clearance point on all appointments to international delegations, people who were going to represent the United States which included a lot of non-government people, of course, in science, technology and other things. So it was at that time, I think, the biggest Bureau in the State Department.

Willens: Compared with the regional areas, as well?

Cleveland: A good deal bigger than the regions, any one of the regional areas. The reason was that, even at that time and much more since, foreign policy was moving from being primarily relations with each country to being multilateral relations. When I was in NATO later, I had occasion to go around and visit all the other countries, all the NATO countries, and I usually stayed with the ambassador. I had a chance to sort of interview him about what his job was like. And I developed the generalization that about 75% of the business on a bilateral ambassador's desk was multilateral business, something going on in GATT, something going on in the U.N., something going on in NATO, something going on in some collective establishment where we were asking the ambassador to Greece to go and talk to his foreign minister and get him to vote right, and that sort of thing. But at the time I first wrote that, a lot of people said that can't possibly be true, that's ridiculous, the government isn't set up that way. And it wasn't, and isn't yet.

Willens: That is even more true today, one would assume.

Cleveland: Well it is, and so what's happened is that all sorts of other bureaus have developed the oceans and science and all that. But all that stuff was in IO at the time—in my Bureau.

Willens: I see.

Cleveland: World Weatherwatch started there and all the discussions about international communications policy, the INTELSAT business and so on, was partly handled by the Legal Advisor's office, but the substantive base for it was in IO. For the same reason, there were two pieces of the world that didn't seem to fit in any of the regional bureaus. One was Antarctica and the other was the South Pacific.

Willens: The South Pacific including the Trust Territory?

Cleveland: And particularly because it was still a Trust Territory. At least large chunks of it were still in the Trust Territory. I had the regional responsibility for that part of the world and for Antarctica. I was the chairman of the interdepartmental committee on the Antarctic Treaty.

Willens: Do you have any recollection of when the problem of the Trust Territory or Micronesia first came to your attention?

Cleveland: Well, I don't recall the specific incident, although it appears from the first couple of letters you have there, a letter from Stewart Udall as Secretary of the Interior and a letter that I sent to Adlai Stevenson at the time.

Willens: Do you have any idea what prompted Secretary Udall's letter to you on this subject?

Cleveland: No, I was interested in that. The memory does play tricks, because my recollection of the relationship with Interior on the whole subject was that they tended to be digging their heels in and they were not very successful at getting enough money from Congress to do what needed to be done in the Territory—to do exactly what the Secretary is talking about doing there. So I did not recollect that their starting policy was as close to my own sense of what ought to be done as these documents reveal.

Willens: I think to some extent the documents may be misleading in that regard. One only knows the partial story from the documents.

Cleveland: I don't think that the people underneath—Udall was of course a political liberal—but I don't think that the people down the line in Interior were enthusiastic about getting them off the colonial status. As I recollect, two things first caught my attention as a sort of interesting political puzzle about the Trust Territory. One, it looked as if the decolonization process continued at the pace that it was going, that we would wind up with the last colony, which I thought, in terms of our own history, would be grotesque and we should somehow avoid getting to that ridiculous position. The other thing was that we made a study, I think it was in 1961, of all the major decisions of the U.N. going all the way back to the beginning of the U.N. and tried to figure out how they would have come out on various assumptions about weighted voting. There was a lot of talk about that at that time—about weighted voting. We concluded that, no matter how you weighted the votes, we would have done all right historically, but that if we were to assume that every little island that got decolonized wound up as a separate country, so that you had a vision of a hundred Naurus, it began to look as if the "one-country one-vote" principle in the U.N. was just going to become insupportable from the point of view of the big countries like ours. So I was concerned from the beginning that it work out not only that the Islands would still be more or less in our orbit, which is what Secretary Udall was suggesting in that first letter, but also that they be grouped together either in becoming a part of some larger country or at least grouped together so that they wouldn't all become separately independent. So that was an important piece. I haven't been able to go through all this

material carefully enough to ascertain whether somebody reading these documents would know that's what we were thinking.

Willens: I think based on our view of the documents that a person would not get that view, which again demonstrates the limitations of the documentary record that has been made available to us after several years of litigation. A few things happened in 1961 that have been suggested as contributing to the perceived need to review U.S. policy. One was the report of the U.N. visiting mission in 1961, which I think can be fairly characterized as more critical of U.S. administration of the Trust Territory than had been previously seen in U.N. documents. Do you have any recollection of the sense that that report was a heads-up signal that there was going to be a potential U.N. problem here.

Cleveland: Yes, that was definitely a signal, but frankly it was a signal which viewed from our position in the bureaucracy was good news. It gave us something to work with. If we kept on this line we'd keep getting this kind of flak from the U.N. And it's embarrassing for the Kennedy Administration which is supposed to be liberal (a word that had not been expunged from the vocabulary at that time) to be criticized for being sort of reactionary colonialists.

Willens: Another thing that happened was a polio epidemic in the Marshall Islands and there's some suggestion in the materials that President Kennedy or his principal advisors thought that such a phenomenon in an area under U.S. administration was offensive and steps should be taken to prevent its recurrence.

Cleveland: Yes, especially since they had experience in their family with retardation and so on, they were sensitive to that kind of trouble. I think that was a factor, although I was never in a meeting where Kennedy said anything like that.

Willens: Were you ever in a meeting with President Kennedy where he said anything about Micronesia or the Trust Territory?

Cleveland: We certainly were in several meetings on the issues involved here. Generally his orientation tended to be "Let's handle this so it doesn't get in the way of the larger things we're trying to do." And when we needed to push the Interior Department to move faster or to push the Pentagon to be less restrictive or push the Congress to put up more money, we generally got a good hearing in the White House, as I recall. The White House was a usable weapon for us bureaucratically.

Willens: Were your views shared by Secretary Rusk and the Undersecretary for Political Affairs?

Cleveland: Yes, very much so. First of all, Rusk had once had the job that I had, back at the time of the Korean War, for example. He was the person who was responsible for the staff work that led to the very good handling of the Korean War that weekend when the North Koreans struck and Truman had the famous Blair House dinner, at which both the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and the Secretary of Defense were against doing anything and Dean Acheson carried the day with the President (who probably already made up his mind anyway) by arguing that we should respond. The political part of that response was all organized by Dean Rusk at the time.

Willens: So it would be fair to say that he was both knowledgeable and supportive of the kinds of issues that you were dealing with.

Cleveland: And he was more heavily influenced than perhaps another Secretary might have been by the U.N. considerations. In most of the domestic departments and in the White House staff you tended to get a sort of cynical sneer when you spoke of the general opinion of mankind or anything like that. Even though that was in the Declaration of Independence.

But Rusk was not cynical about that. He was interested in the U.N. politics of the matter. He was intellectually interested in it on the basis of his own experience. For example, when I needed an answer from the seventh floor I never had any trouble with access to him. I was often invited up for sort of “scotch on the rocks” at 7:00 in the after-hours sessions. We had been friends before, although I quickly learned that, when he’s in office you call him Mr. Secretary, you don’t call him Dean. He frequently put me in position of coordinating regional bureaus. For example, on the Congo issue trying to keep the European and African bureaus out of each other’s hair on the question of how we would maneuver in the Congo.

Willens: Many of the assumptions that are proposed in Secretary Udall’s letter of February 26 to you seem to be assumptions that relate to the areas of national security and foreign policy of the United States. Is it possible that this letter was the result of some preliminary discussions with you or others at State that yielded this letter as more or less of a formulation of a consensus on this subject?

Cleveland: Yes, this letter reflects a lot of views and discussions that we had before.

Willens: It’s February of 1962, and what we don’t have are any staff papers that lead up to this letter, although it and subsequent documents that I’ve shared with you make reference to some earlier unsuccessful staff efforts to examine policy in the Trust Territory. Do you have any recollection of efforts at the staff level that might have preceded this letter?

Cleveland: Yes, there was quite a lot of committee work and bickering about the long delays in developing the most accessible developing countries that we had, which were these colonies of ours. Hawaii having been made a state just before along with Alaska, the only two sore thumbs that were sticking out were Puerto Rico and the Trust Territory—two very different cases. But in both cases I regarded it as sort of part of our bureaucratic responsibility to make sure that the political cost of our still having colonies was minimized and that could only be done by how they were handled. So as I reread this the other day when you sent it to me, I was struck by the thought that this couldn’t have been a sort of independent initiative by the Secretary of the Interior that hadn’t already been sorted out with us or it couldn’t possibly have been as close to my own view as it was that early. You see in the next letter I was explaining to Adlai Stevenson that, even though this matter was not at the level for his personal attention up in the U.N. (it was handled by Jack Bingham in the Fourth Committee, I think, of the General Assembly), I thought that the political implications of it for him and the Kennedy Administration were such as to require him to focus on it. So I wrote him a rather careful letter explaining about it.

Willens: Yes, I gather from what you say...

Cleveland: The reproduction is not very good.

Willens: No, I’m sorry about that, that’s the best we could do. I gather from what you’ve said that you find the Udall letter basically to coincide with the views that you and others in State had about the need to adopt some new policy for the Trust Territory.

Cleveland: Yes.

Willens: And that is reflected in your letter to Ambassador Stevenson dated March 1, 1962.

Cleveland: It would be the right way to do it in that situation—to do it through the department that had the responsibility for the Territory rather than to go to the President directly and say why don’t we do something with the Trust Territory, which would make the Interior Department mad.

- Willens: There's reference in this letter to the policy of the Navy Department to exclude people from the area. Was that an important negative factor in your judgment that needed to be addressed in connection with this review?
- Cleveland: Yes, because you couldn't head the islands toward some form of free association with the United States, which is really what we had in mind, as long as they were being treated as if they were a big Naval base. So there was an obvious contrast between the Navy view—essentially the Defense Department view—and our sense of what the politics of the matter were. I don't know if it appears in here, but I kept pressing about what exactly is the strategic value of these islands. What are we trying to do? We kept asking the same question and making ourselves somewhat unpopular about Guantanamo, about Subic Bay, and so on. I recommended during the period that I was there 30 years ago—some of us were suggesting that we should make plans for getting out of the Philippines because it was just going to be, as it has been, a constant trouble and it still is a trouble.
- Willens: Do you recall whether the civilian leaders of the Defense Department were able to bring about a change in the Navy policy or was it necessary to go to the White House?
- Cleveland: No, I think that was why this operation involved Paul Nitze, who was head of the ISA Bureau. He was a very bright and sensible guy and, I think, he did have a substantial effect on this. I don't recall this issue ever getting to McNamara's level in the Pentagon. I saw quite a lot of McNamara in those days, but I don't recall any meeting with him on this subject.
- Willens: Was the Department of Defense then generally on board in 1962 that there was some need to change policy, perhaps along the lines suggested in the Udall letter?
- Cleveland: Yes, and the team of people at the level that was handling the matter, that is Nitze, Carl Kaysen in the White House, who was Bundy's deputy, and really Udall personally in the Interior Department, and myself in the State Department, we were all, as I recall, on the same wave length. Later on, the inability of the Interior Department to carry out the implications of that policy required a certain amount of bureaucratic in-fighting about it. But I think the concept as conveyed in these first two documents in your file here set a pretty clear sense of direction.
- Willens: They led very shortly thereafter to the National Security Action Memorandum No. 145 and one has to assume that there had been agreement among the agencies before that kind of directive was put before the President.
- Cleveland: Yes, that is how national security directions come into being, by committee work.
- Willens: Now, I noticed that Haydn Williams' name appears as having attended this March 1 meeting in his capacity as a deputy to Paul Nitze. Haydn Williams subsequently was designated many years later to be the President's representative in dealing with the Micronesians with respect to their future political status. Did you know Haydn Williams at the time?
- Cleveland: Yes, he was in these meetings and so on.
- Willens: Do you have any impression of his contribution to the policy at that time or his subsequent representation of the government in these negotiations?
- Cleveland: Well, it's pretty hard to excavate the memory. I don't recall ever having to argue hard with him on a subject. I would guess from that that he and I were sort of on the same wave length.

- Willens: Did the National Security Council play a role? You mentioned Kaysen as deputy to Bundy at the time. Did the National Security Council play a traditional sort of coordinating function here or was there some different kind of role that they may have performed?
- Cleveland: Well, they followed it.
- Willens: Do you have any specific recollection of incidents where he [Kaysen] or other members of the staff played a significant role in this policy?
- Cleveland: I would say that it wasn't very high on their agenda. Kaysen's primary beat was economic foreign policy. I suppose he had this mandate sort of in the "all other" category—what we used to call in making statistical tables the "Other Other" column. My recollection is that most of the real part of the policy discussion was with the international security side of the Pentagon and with the Interior Department, both the Secretary's office and the people actually running the Trust Territory.
- Willens: Your letter to Ambassador Stevenson (as I indicated to you) is the only written record we've obtained of the March 1 meeting that took place to review the assumptions and the recommendations set forth in Secretary Udall's letter. I'm sure there must have been memoranda for the file prepared in the several agencies, but those documents either have not survived the years or were not found in the course of responding to our requests.
- Cleveland: There must have been something in Interior.
- Willens: I would have expected documents at Interior and Defense and perhaps something more detailed within the State Department as well. Do you have any recollection at all of that luncheon meeting as being a particularly important or memorable event in developing U.S. policy?
- Cleveland: Only that it was the first time I think we had managed to get together at that level and personally with Stewart Udall. And sort of get a focus on how we were going to make the Trust Territory self-supporting and get them off the colonial status somehow. And perhaps the first time we lifted to this level the issue of should it be free association or what exactly were we talking about in the form of a post-colonial status.
- Willens: Did you have some rather specific definition in mind when you used the term "free association?"
- Cleveland: Well, it was sort of vaguely by analogy to Puerto Rico.
- Willens: It has come over the years to have a different meaning and is now embodied in the relationships that the United States has with the Republic of the Marshall Islands, for example, and the Federation of Micronesian States. It typically means an entity that possesses sovereignty but has delegated responsibility for foreign affairs or defense to a larger power. That's something different than what Puerto Rico was or is, although there is continuing debate about Puerto Rico as you're undoubtedly aware. But when you used the term back in the 1960s, were you using it in sort of a rough way as referring to the status of Puerto Rico?
- Cleveland: The other analogy that was discussed at the time was the direction in which New Zealand and Australia had gone.
- Willens: With the Cook Islands?
- Cleveland: With the Cook Islands and with the, what's it called,...
- Willens: Papua New Guinea?

- Cleveland: Papua New Guinea. That they weren't exactly independent but they weren't exactly dependent either. It was because we really didn't think that they ought to be just kind of free-floating nation states, because they obviously weren't going to have enough resources to be on their own, so they were going to be somewhat attached to us or somewhat attached to somebody else. It didn't seem like a real good idea to have them attached to anybody else.
- Willens: One of the other documents I sent you was also dated March 1, 1962, the very same day of the luncheon meeting. It's a document within the Budget Bureau to the Director from D. C. Lindholm. It refers in the very first sentence to a memorandum to the President on the "1963 preview" and pointed out the need to define the objectives of the U. S. policy with respect to the Trust Territory. Do you have any idea what the "1963 preview" may have referred to?
- Cleveland: That term doesn't ring a bell, but I think there was a deadline for U.N. consideration, maybe it was for a review period for trust territories in general. But there was an assumption, I recall, that in 1963 there would have to be a kind of international review and we would have to make an exposition of the situation in our Trust Territory.
- Willens: I see.
- Cleveland: We were quite conscious at the time that how we handled this issue would also affect what we could insist on the part of the South Africans in the area that has now become Namibia, but which was then, of course, a trust territory given to South Africa because it had been a German colony, I guess, before [World War II].
- Willens: Do you remember any initiatives coming from the Bureau of the Budget in connection with this matter?
- Cleveland: No. I don't remember the Bureau of the Budget being involved at all. Of course, they followed everything, and had to review anything that went to Congress in the way of a request, so that's probably what they were thinking about.
- Willens: One of the interesting aspects about this Budget Bureau document is its summary of what it characterizes as the present objectives of U.S. policy for the Trust Territory as it had been over the preceding years. First, that the Trust Territory can and must be economically self-sufficient. Second, that the primitive economic and social structure of the islands was to be preserved. Thirdly, that neither the U.S. nor the Micronesians would be making any decisions on their future political status within the foreseeable future defined as 15 to 20 years. This is one of the few U.S. government documents that, in capsule form, tries to summarize what had been the preexisting policy toward the Trust Territory at the time that you and other members of the Kennedy Administration came into office. Does this description strike you as a fair and appropriate one?
- Cleveland: Yes, it strikes me as sort of the old fashioned set-up that we were trying to change.
- Willens: That's the way it's written, that these were the assumptions.
- Cleveland: Our assumption was that self-sufficiency was out of the question. Remember in those days nobody ever thought of 200-mile zones and they might well be self-sufficient within those 200-mile zones.
- Willens: How about the second assumption?
- Cleveland: The second assumption was not our assumption. Our assumption was that it should be a modernization process. This was a developing country and it should be given a chance at modernization.

- Willens: If the people wanted modernization.
- Cleveland: Yes. But the assumption in that field, which I knew quite a lot about because I had been ten years in the AID business at various times before, was that, given the slightest opportunity, people wanted to develop, they wanted to get richer and so on. So this was a "let them be primitive and happy" kind of approach. That was, I think, a fair description of the ruling assumption for a decade or two before.
- Willens: How about the third assumption?
- Cleveland: The third one may have been the pre-existing idea, but our assumption at the time was that the political situation was going to require some change in political status and the question was what kind exactly and how would we present it in the U.N., and that sort of thing.
- Willens: With respect to the 15 or 20 years, I gather that amount of time was not available, in your judgment?
- Cleveland: Our assumption was that it wasn't available in U.N. political terms and that to take that much time would leave us out on a limb as the last colonial power, which always struck me as just grotesque.
- Willens: Okay. The next document that I gave you was the National Security Action Memorandum No. 145 dated April 18, 1962.
- Cleveland: Excuse me, just coming back to that other point, the guy that wrote this Budget Bureau memorandum, after stating these antique assumptions, then has the point quite correct at the top of the second page.
- Willens: Yes, he's not stating these by way of expressing agreement with them. He's stating them as descriptive of the issues that he thinks are no longer valid as I read the memorandum.
- Cleveland: Right.
- Willens: The National Security Action Memorandum itself may not add much to our discussion, but it does make reference, however, to the creation of a task force to develop and put into effect the programs necessary to carry out the general policy. Who from the State Department served on the task force, if you recall?
- Cleveland: I think I went to at least some of the meetings, but I don't recall that the work was done in a formal context like this in practice.
- Willens: Do you recall any further discussions, at the Secretary or Assistant Secretary level, before this National Security Action Memorandum was approved by the President? We have the Udall letter, we have a luncheon meeting, we undoubtedly have had several months of staff work that led up to those events. Do you remember anything further that took place before President Kennedy approved this policy?
- Cleveland: The main thing that I recall, and this is a parochial point probably, was worrying that if they set up a formal mechanism the Department of the Interior would have to be chairman. If that was done below the Cabinet level, that might be troublesome because the people that actually ran the territories were not that interested in the U.N. aspects and the damage limitation that was my main preoccupation.
- Willens: Do you remember having any discussions with people in the Office of Territorial Affairs at Interior early on in your tenure? Mr. Taitano was head of that Office for a while, and he was succeeded by Ruth Van Cleve. Do you remember either of those individuals and dealing with either of them?

- Cleveland: Yes, I remember Ruth Van Cleve. I don't remember Taitano.
- Willens: Do you remember Mrs. Van Cleve as having a view with respect to the need for a changed policy?
- Cleveland: My general recollection is that they were sort of dragging their feet, mainly because they had a difficult problem. They could never get the money they ought to get from the Congress and they couldn't give the islands the economic opportunity to get into the political position that we wanted them to get into. So it's probably understandable that they were, you know, saying don't rush the fences, slow down, and so on.
- Willens: It was about this time that Chairman Aspinall was informed by an Assistant to the President that there was an Executive Branch review going on with respect to Trust Territory policy. Did you personally have any discussions in 1961 or 1962 with Congressman Aspinall or others about the need for change in U.S. policy?
- Cleveland: I remember talking with him and preparing, or at least signing, papers that were addressed to the Congressional pressure on the subject. But it was again a sort of rear guard trying to protect our position in the U.N. My recollection of Aspinall was that he had more sort of a colonial view than we thought was warranted.
- Willens: Well, he apparently had the view shared by many that the United States had acquired these islands at the cost of considerable effort and human life in World War II and that they should not be let go.
- Cleveland: Yes.
- Willens: I don't want to be pejorative in characterizing his effort. Did you have a view as to what motivated his attitudes with respect to the Trust Territory?
- Cleveland: Well, I think he was pushing us not to push so hard for accommodating U.N. opinion. And since we were the experts on U.N. opinion, we were naturally resisting that push on his part. I don't recall knowing, or at least I don't remember knowing, why Aspinall was particularly seized of this subject himself. Maybe the documents reveal, or was it just that he was in California and therefore closer than we were.
- Willens: Well, his views were not unique to him and we have some material, some of which you have, about testimony that you gave, I believe, before the committee and we will come to that. Just one last question about National Security Action Memorandum No.145. When a directive like that is approved by the President, is it your judgment that it is classified information and not to be shared with people outside the government?
- Cleveland: I think all of national security action memos were classified.
- Willens: There came a time when the 1964 U.N. visiting mission came in for briefing sessions, and they asked some questions as to what U.S. policy was with respect to the future of the Trust Territory. There had been some briefing papers prepared in advance of those sessions and it was rather clearly indicated that one should try to deal with those questions in a very generalized way and not reveal that there was a Presidential directive that set a particular objective. Is that your understanding of what happened?
- Cleveland: Yes, but that would be standard operating practice.
- Willens: In what respect?
- Cleveland: Well, to handle questions with non-Americans in a way that doesn't reveal the contents of classified documents. Even if you were using material in the classified documents for your answer, you present it as your own view or my understanding of the policy, or something

like that. You would not say: "Well, it says here in the national security memorandum, and so it must be right."

Willens: Well, in fact the next document that I have here is a memorandum of a conversation that you and others had with Ambassador Laking from the Embassy of New Zealand in June of 1962. You will note that all of Ambassador Laking's comments have been redacted from this memorandum before it was produced for us.

Cleveland: Why is that, do you think?

Willens: The people who were administering the Freedom of Information Act, I think, have standard instructions that anything attributed to a representative of foreign government is to be exempt as relating to either national security or the President's control over foreign relations. I'm not too sure it's a legitimate exemption under the Freedom of Information Act, but it's not one that we decided to challenge. The memorandum is interesting because it reflects some of your thinking at the time about the role that the metropolitan powers might play in the Western Pacific and you made reference to that earlier.

Cleveland: Yes.

Willens: It also suggests some free association relationship might be an alternative here that should be explored.

Cleveland: Yes, we were going to treat them like people, even like Americans.

Willens: There are other documents suggesting that over the years there were briefing sessions that people in your Bureau conducted with ambassadors or representatives from the friendly nations in the Western Pacific. Were the views of those countries a matter that you believed should be taken into account in formulating policy for that part of the world?

Cleveland: Yes, because if we could define free association in more or less the same way that other allies (and they were allies after all) were defining it, that that would make it easier to defend in the international forums that we were mostly concerned with. It would also enable us to explain better domestically that we were acting in ways that were consistent with the way that our allies were reacting, which was always a good thing to be able to say domestically.

Willens: There's some reference in either this document or others at about this time that refer to Puerto Rico and the fact that members of Congress were not particularly sympathetic or understanding of the status of Puerto Rico. Do you have any recollection of conversations with members of Congress or reports of conversations that suggest that one should try to avoid in the Trust Territory a status that would be characterized as similar to Puerto Rico's?

Cleveland: We were already getting some flak in the U.N. about Puerto Rico at that time and that, of course, touched very hypersensitive nerves in Congress. I mean, the idea that anybody should tell the United States of America what it could do and couldn't do, you know, about its own areas was offensive to a lot of people.

Willens: There came a time when the U.N. was also looking at Guam, the Virgin Islands, and American Samoa, isn't that correct?

Cleveland: Yes. But Puerto Rico was always—because it was closer and because it was connected in everybody's mind with politics and relations with Cuba and so on—much more neuralgic.

Willens: There's some suggestion in this memorandum reflecting the meeting with

Ambassador Laking that you were concerned that the strategic importance of Micronesia might be likely to increase over the next several years. Do you recall having any sense in 1962 that the strategic importance of this area was something that was going to be of growing concern?

Cleveland: Well, I think that I was probably reflecting there what the Defense Department was telling us.

Willens: Although you suggested earlier, you tended to have a skeptical view.

Cleveland: I was more skeptical about it, but here I was talking to a foreign diplomat, although George Laking was a very good friend actually as well. So in that context I would not have expressed my own skepticism. I must say the way they have edited this, it does make it look like I did all the talking.

Willens: Only if someone doesn't understand what the blank spaces stand for. The next document I wanted to review with you is a very substantial seven-page letter that you addressed to Assistant Secretary Carver of Interior dated March 27, 1963. Do you recall before you wrote this letter having personal dealings with Mr. Carver on this subject?

Cleveland: Yes, he was the main person that I dealt with in the Interior Department at the time. He was my opposite number. So I saw something of him and what I don't recall is precisely the occasion for this. It says the initial contribution to the status report.

Willens: Yes.

Cleveland: Carver, I guess, was the chairman of that task force.

Willens: That may be. I'm not sure I know. There was a task force but, as I indicated to you, it seems to have met at least a half a dozen times in 1962, but I recall that we only have a few isolated reports that appear to have been generated for use by the task force. We have no systematic record of agendas for its meetings or minutes reflecting actions taken at those meetings. One question I have for you is whether you have any recollection, however vague, as to what this task force might have done in the nearly twelve months since issuance of National Security Action Memorandum No. 145 to the date of your letter to Assistant Secretary Carver?

Cleveland: Well obviously it wasn't a process characterized by celerity, was it?

Willens: No. There was another National Security Action Memorandum referred to in the first paragraph of this letter—NSAM Number 229—which, in essence, asked for a report as to what progress had been made to implement NSAM No. 145. I wonder whether it might be fair to assume that the President requested a status report because he hadn't yet gotten any fruits of the labors of this task force.

Cleveland: Well, I think the fairest assumption would probably be that we were pushing the White House staff to light a fire under the Interior Department.

Willens: Well, the letter that you have in front of you does emphasize some of the international developments that had taken place and, to some extent, reiterates some of the points you've made here today, specifically the reduction in the number of territories from eleven to

Cleveland: Three.

Willens: ...three and growing international pressures and the possibility of embarrassment in the United Nations. So the first portion of this letter is designed to set the predicate for

some kind of a recommendation for action. I guess the question is whether you have any recollection beyond the four corners of this document as to what might have precipitated it?

Cleveland: Wider policy considerations. The people who were actually running the territories were not anxious to be pushed, naturally.

Willens: One thing that interested me was the first paragraph on page two where it is suggested that expectations of the Micronesians may have been aroused by some of the preliminary steps taken, but they have not yet seen any tangible results. Do you have the sense—and I'm looking backwards with the benefit of hindsight—that it was realistic to think that a major new funding program could be presented to Congress, approved by Congress, and implemented in less than a year?

Cleveland: Well, yes, because nobody was ever talking about very much money. I mean tiny—in the U.S. budget you would hardly find this item, no matter what size it was. So I think that if there had been a strong push in Interior with our support and with the Defense Department beating its usual drum about strategic importance, and so on, that they probably could have gotten double or triple the amount of money. I don't recall what the numbers were, but I was always struck by how tiny the numbers were.

Willens: It was \$7 million throughout the 1950s and the initial effort was to double it to approximately \$15 million.

Cleveland: Well, in the politics at this level in the government, that is real chicken feed.

Willens: Another aspect of the letter that is interesting is also found on page two in the second paragraph where you express the view that the accelerating urgency arising from international concerns suggests that an act of self-determination should take place no later than 1968. This may be one of the very first documents in which a time table is suggested for a plebiscite at which the Micronesians would express and exercise their right of self-determination. Do you recall any discussion within the Department of State as to this kind of a timetable and its feasibility?

Cleveland: I recall that we talked about the time table. I didn't recall the 1968 date.

Willens: But it was your sense at the time that if there had been sufficient initiative on the Hill and in the Executive Branch, it could be done within that period of time.

Cleveland: Well, it was more my sense that you couldn't hold it off much longer than that . . .

Willens: I see.

Cleveland: . . . in terms of the international pressures.

Willens: You also make reference in that second paragraph to the anticipated report of the Visiting Mission that was scheduled to do its assignment the following year in 1964.

Cleveland: I think that the Solomon mission was sort of a preemptive strike to make our own assessment before we were pushed into it by foreigners.

Willens: Well that's an interesting point, and we'll come to that in a minute. You make a reference here, I guess on page three, to the Peace Corps and the documents show some very early consideration given to using the Peace Corps in Micronesia, but in fact the program never got implemented for Micronesia until 1966. Do you recall any early discussions about the possible use of the Peace Corps and whether there was dissent within the Executive Branch as to the desirability as to using them?

- Cleveland: My recollection is the Interior Department never liked the idea. It obviously cut across their jurisdiction, because they would be less responsible for Peace Corps volunteers than for their own employees. But my own feeling was that the Peace Corps would be useful. I'd been quite involved in helping the Peace Corps get underway, and advocating that it be an international Peace Corps and in fact an international Peace Corps sort of was set up at the time.
- Willens: You mean international in a sense of people from other countries participating in the program.
- Cleveland: Dutch, Belgium and others, both through the U.N. and the U.S. In this case it seemed like a good way to get some resources—some intellectual resources—in there and to get some young people that really understood the Islands, which we were obviously going to need because there were going to be all kinds of complications for us. Rather similar logic to the logic of Peace Corps itself. In spite the fact that there was all of the talk about how much help we were going to give the developing countries, I always thought the most important output for the Peace Corps would be a generation of young folks that really understood about developing countries. I remember at one point there was something about sending lawyers there to think about the future relationships. And again the Peace Corps was a possible source for lawyers who weren't coming out of the Attorney General's office but were sort of more free-wheeling.
- Willens: The letter later makes reference to the ambiguous status of the Trust Territory—that is to say, it is neither a foreign country nor a territory of the United States; and the letter suggested that generates difficulties in terms of making federal programs available in Micronesia. Do you recall whether that issue was an important one?
- Cleveland: Well, I think it was important in that the people primarily responsible for the Trust Territory had difficulty remembering that this wasn't an American colony. Their mindset was that this was an American colony; this was the Virgin Islands, this was something like that. We had to keep reminding them that this is a trust that has been given to us by the international community, and so we've got to be sure that we can deal with the international community effectively or otherwise they'll make trouble for us. And that was what was being predicted about this 1964 Mission.
- Willens: Near the end of the letter on page 6 there's a suggestion at the top of the page that it would be useful to concentrate Executive Branch resources by designating a single person with Presidential backing to coordinate the various agencies. This is very similar to subsequent recommendations by the State Department that a special assistant be appointed in the White House to deal with this problem and that recommendation was typically opposed by the Department of the Interior. Do you have any recollection of discussions with Interior or White House personnel as to the desirability of having such a special assistant appointed?
- Cleveland: That idea really came out of the peculiar bureaucratic position in which we found ourselves. It would have been nice if the President just said: "Harlan, why don't you handle this problem?" But we knew that was never going to happen and yet we wanted to be sure it was handled as if it were a policy question and not just an administration of the territories question. And the only answer to that seemed to be to put somebody in the White House.
- Willens: Why did that never materialize until 1971?
- Cleveland: Well Haydn Williams was appointed at some point...

Willens: 1971.

Cleveland: ... 1971, right. I don't know, but I suppose the natural opposition of the Interior Department, backed no doubt by sort of conservative opinion in Congress generally, to having an activist policy about this. That was what we were struggling with the whole time. What I don't recall is that this ever really rose to the level of a subject that was very interesting to the President or to the White House staff. It was mostly sort of artillery from the State Department and the Interior Department—we using foreigners and our mission at the U.N. as missiles and they using Congress and probably general opinion of most Americans that foreigners shouldn't tell us what to do about our Trust Territory.

Willens: Near the end of your years there in 1966 and 1967 there was continued effort within the State Department to prepare a memorandum for the President with a supporting memorandum that would have the agreement of the three major agencies (Defense, State and Interior) and one of the recommendations that would have been put before the President was for a special assistant. It's unclear from the documentary record that there ever was agreement on a memo to the President and that in fact it ever went forward. My best guess now based on this document is that it did not go forward.

Cleveland: I don't recall that there ever was. Of course, in 1966 and 1967 I was already gone. I went in the fall of 1965 to NATO. But up to the time I left, the idea of a special assistant or czar or somebody who would worry about this subject which was really not effectively in the jurisdiction of any one department was kicked around. I don't recall that it ever achieved the status of an inter-departmental agreement.

Willens: Do you recall any discussion about this letter before a report was submitted from the Task Force to the White House?

Cleveland: I don't recall even this letter to John Carver, although I probably did a good deal of editing on it since I did that on everything of this importance, but it was mostly prepared by Mike Newlin and others who were responsible for the subject.

Willens: Who was Newlin?

Cleveland: He's a foreign service officer. He later became quite an expert on the Middle East and in fact I think, at one point, was the Counsel General to the Arabs on the West Bank sitting in Jerusalem. We had a Counsel General in Jerusalem; we didn't have an Embassy in Jerusalem. We had an Embassy in Tel Aviv. Because Jerusalem wasn't yet agreed to be the capital. But we had a position in Jerusalem primarily to keep in touch with the situation on the West Bank. That was the job to which he went after this.

Willens: Why wouldn't McHenry and other of the names that you mentioned have quite a role in putting this together?

Cleveland: What was the date?

Willens: March 27, 1963. I am not sure McHenry was on duty then.

Cleveland: I don't know how early McHenry came on.

Willens: I see.

Cleveland: But Hennis' name is also on it.

Willens: That's right.

Cleveland: He was, I think, the person on the staff, the desk officer for this subject.

Willens: Okay.

- Cleveland: And obviously there was participation by the Far Eastern/South Pacific people.
- Willens: Yes.
- Cleveland: Even though the action jurisdiction for the Trust Territory was ours.
- Willens: I understand. Within a short time after the President got a staff report from the Task Force he did appoint the committee chaired by Mr. Solomon to investigate and make recommendations regarding the Trust Territory. You made reference to that earlier. Do you have any recollection of playing a role or participating in discussions about appointing such a committee?
- Cleveland: I recall pushing for such a committee primarily as a preemptive move in connection with the U.N.. The U.N. was going to appoint a committee and we wanted to do something before that. Also it was another way of pushing the Department of the Interior and the relevant Congressional committees to be more activist about preparing the population of these islands for what seemed to us the inevitable contingencies that one of these days they are going to be asked what they thought.
- Willens: I don't see any document that we have received that contained the recommendation that you just summarized. For example, the recommendation of a committee like that is not included in your letter to Carver in his capacity of chairman of the Task Force. Do you recall making the recommendation to the White House through other channels?
- Cleveland: I don't recall just how it came up, but what I recall was feeling strongly that it was important to have such a mission and also feeling strongly that Tony Solomon would be a very good person to do it.
- Willens: Was he someone that you knew?
- Cleveland: Yes.
- Willens: Did you recommend him?
- Cleveland: I think he had been our Assistant Secretary for Economic Affairs or something. So his background was more on finance and economics, but that would make sense because, from where I sat, what was needed was a push on the economic development of this small developing country as it were. Solomon was a bright and activist person. So I recall being very much in favor of both the having a committee and him, helping to brief him before he went, and talking to him when he got back and so on.
- Willens: Who had the responsibility for picking the other members of the committee?
- Cleveland: That probably would have been done more by the White House Staff than anybody, but they would have had to have somebody from Interior there, somebody from Defense.
- Willens: Do you remember any opposition from Interior to the concept of an outside committee such as this one?
- Cleveland: I don't recall. But I can't believe that they thought it was a great thing.
- Willens: Do you remember reviewing the report of the Solomon Mission when it was completed?
- Cleveland: Yes.
- Willens: What was your assessment of its quality?
- Cleveland: It was excellent.
- Willens: What you recall as being the principal thrust of the report?

- Cleveland: That they wanted to get a real development operation going.
- Willens: They did have some discussion of political sentiment in the Trust Territory. One of the specific observations was that there was very limited sentiment in the Trust Territory for independence as an option.
- Cleveland: That is what I really wanted to hear.
- Willens: That is what you and everybody at State wanted to hear.
- Cleveland: That was what everybody in the government wanted to hear. Nobody wanted to think of them breaking off as just an independent entity.
- Willens: He also reported, I believe, that there was some considerable confusion and a certain lack of sophistication there in Micronesia with respect to future status alternatives.
- Cleveland: And no wonder.
- Willens: Would that have been a source of apprehension to government policy makers who were looking toward a plebiscite as early as 1968?
- Cleveland: Yes. But the answer to that was more education and more development, more of a sense of self-worth. So all those became arguments for the development program, political arguments for the development program, rather than judgments that were a surprise in themselves.
- Willens: The Solomon Mission report remained classified for many years and was the source of some controversy in Micronesia.
- Cleveland: Is it now? Classified?
- Willens: We received the summary of the report, which appears to have been declassified in response to our FOIA request. We never received the bulk of the committee report. In a recent interview Professor Richard Cooper, who you probably know well,
- Cleveland: Yes.
- Willens: . . . told my colleague, a young historian, that he never saw a copy of the complete report and that it was classified upon delivery. Was the report as you recall critical of the Trust Territory Administration or the Interior Department?
- Cleveland: Yes. It complained that the U.S. for many years hadn't been getting on with the development of the area and that everything in the political context argued for getting on with it. So I can't believe that the folks in Interior felt that this was anything but a cut at their jugular.
- Willens: Many years later, in fact, while you were at the University of Hawaii, a portion of the report was obtained and published by some student activists in a publication called "The Young Micronesian." It was used in the course of negotiations to suggest that the United States was trying to continue its colonial domination of the Trust Territory. The underlying assumption of the Solomon Report, consistent with National Security Action Memo No. 145, was that it was in U.S. interests to achieve sovereignty over the Trust Territory and that was viewed by the critics as a colonial impulse or motive. How do you react to that line of criticism?
- Cleveland: I think it was U.S. policy right along to keep the Trust Territory from being anybody else's, and since it would have to be somebody's because it was weak and we thought that meant some form of essentially dependent status. My view at the time was that the more that the essentially dependent status could be the product of a genuine selection of that option by

- the people in the Territory, the better it would be. Maybe it was because of the fact that I had been in the AID business before. I didn't think that they would get to that point unless we took some pretty vigorous measures for economic development and particularly for education in the Territory. But getting that done was not on my desk, it was over in the Interior Department. So we were constantly badgering the Interior Department to get on with it. Does that make sense?
- Willens: Yes. The criticism that I tried to summarize was one that we and the Marianas heard regularly in the course of negotiating with the United States. The critics of separate negotiations argued that becoming an dependent part of the United States was acquiescing in a colonial status even if you voted by an overwhelming majority to do it. The underlying assumption of the critics was that no well informed electorate would choose a status other than independence or a very loose form of free association.
- Cleveland: There are indeed still people in Hawaii who take the same view about Hawaii, that is that it should be an independent kingdom and so forth. But I guess my assumption at the time was that, if people looked realistically at their options, they would conclude that being associated with the United States was a pretty good deal. But it wasn't enough just to tell them that, they had to come to that through a process; and the obstacle to that process was that we weren't handling our aid program for that developing country very effectively, even though we had been given the jurisdiction over it by the U.N.
- Willens: The next document that I sent you might have been a particularly interesting one for you. It is the memorandum from Mr. Sisco to you dated April 11, 1963 and it reports that Chairman Aspinall is angry at what he called the critical and unpatriotic attitude of the Department of State. Congressman Aspinall is alleged to have cited a California speech that you may have made and press coverage of that speech "as examples of State's hostile attitude." Do you have any recollection of what this possibly refers to?
- Cleveland: I don't recall the speech in question, although it is undoubtedly in the public domain and probably in the State Department Bulletin. It published a lot of policy speeches. Do you have the speech?
- Willens: No, I do not have the speech.
- Cleveland: Almost every speech I gave turned up in the State Department Bulletin. I took a good deal of trouble about writing them and so the editors of the Bulletins rather liked them.
- Willens: There is then a suggestion here that you might want to consult with Assistant Secretary Dutton, who I believe was in charge of legislative affairs.
- Cleveland: He was Congressional liaison.
- Willens: And consider at least meeting with Congressman Aspinall. Do you recall taking any action along those lines?
- Cleveland: I did talk with Aspinall at some point. I don't know if it was the result of this or whether it was before or after that speech. I just don't recall.
- Willens: When you met with him, did you feel he understood why you were taking the position that you did as to the need for some action?
- Cleveland: I just recall his view as sort of prototypical of the Congressional view. There is probably a lot of support out in the country. Why did we mess around with all these critics and U.N. people and so on about our islands? They didn't take seriously what I thought we had to take seriously, the fact that this was a U.N. trusteeship that we were administering and not a territory that we owned.

- Willens: There is reference in Mr. Sisco's memo to hearings before the Aspinall committee on the Trust Territory Omnibus Bill for late April 1963. Would you or members of your staff have participated in such hearings or audited them to keep informed.
- Cleveland: I'm sure we would have audited them and if somebody had to testify about the Trust Territory, I suppose it probably would have been me. The other alternative would be somebody from New York, Jack Bingham, for example, who had been a Congressman before.
- Willens: One of the problems with the Congressional side of this is that many of the hearings that took place on the Trust Territory were in executive session and the transcripts are not available—if indeed they ever were generated,
- Cleveland: I have some of them buried deep in my archives.
- Willens: That was something I was going to ask you about.
- Cleveland: A lot of Congressional testimony on all sorts of subjects that I haven't gone through. I am going to go through as I am going to do an autobiography one of these days. But I haven't gone through it so I don't know if I actually have this one or not.
- Willens: Are your papers organized roughly in chronological form?
- Cleveland: No, they are collections of boxes and the trouble with the boxes on this subject is that they are in the JFK Library in Boston.
- Willens: Has the archivist there made any effort to organize or index them?
- Cleveland: They sort of indexed them, but they haven't sort of made a substantive search.
- Willens: We have not had much luck in getting materials from that Library. We have at several other libraries.
- Cleveland: If you ask them to look—if I testified at any point on this subject, I had a wonderful secretary and she kept everything in apple-pie order and so those boxes are probably quite well organized. I have, for example, what may be the best paper record of the Cuban Missile Crisis after the boats turned around, when everybody (including Bobby Kennedy's book) thinks that that was the end of the crisis. But there were actually about five months of negotiations with the Russians conducted by Jack McCloy, but conducted under cover of our U.N. Mission in New York.
- Willens: Did McCloy's biographer understand this?
- Cleveland: I don't know. I haven't read McCloy's biography.
- Willens: Then there is another one in preparation. Two historians were collaborating and they had a difference of view as to how much detail to pursue with respect to Mr. McCloy.
- Cleveland: That was about five months because Khrushchev turned his boats around in October and the thing didn't end until January or February. When we finally got agreement, it was interesting because we established the principle that it was all right to spy on the Cubans if they didn't cooperate because we got the Secretary General of the U.N. to ask Castro to cooperate. So anyway, because McCloy was attached to Stevenson for this purpose, all the instructions to McCloy and all the reports from McCloy were coming back and forth across my desk. Even though there were several other action offices around the government, including the White House, worrying about this. So my secretary just squirreled away everything that came in and out and I am sure that is probably the best record there is of that negotiation.

- Willens: Can you find it—that would be great?
- Cleveland: My problem is going to be to find it.
- Willens: Well, that is right, that certainly is going to be a challenge. You have written so many books; it certainly would be a great contribution if you could write this one.
- Cleveland: The trouble is you only get to write that book once. There is no practice arena for autobiography and, however many books you have written, you don't know how to write an autobiography.
- Willens: There are some people who have tried to write autobiographies at different periods of their life.
- Cleveland: I've never tried to do that. But I have got a lot of stuff. I've got logs, letters that I wrote when I went to China when I was a junior in college with Bob Reichauer, Ed's older brother, who was killed on that trip and it was a very dramatic thing and I've got it all down on paper.
- Willens: Let me try to finish here. The next document that I have is a one-page document from you up the line to the Undersecretary for Political Affairs dated December 26, 1963. It refers to an attached memorandum which you were contemplating sending to the chairman of the Task Force for the TTPI. We do not have the attachment. This would be yet another memorandum for Mr. Carver after the Solomon Report was submitted to the President. After he received the Solomon Report, President Kennedy issued another National Security Action Memorandum on October 25, 1963 asking the agencies to review the Solomon Committee's recommendations and implement them. Do you recall any dealings with the Department of the Interior following receipt of the Solomon Report about the substance of its recommendation?
- Cleveland: I don't, and I don't really recall this timing of a plebiscite issue. I don't recall what happened about it. But you will notice here "D. McH" [on the document] which would be Don McHenry, so he would probably be the best source on that.
- Willens: There was a reference to a plebiscite here . . .
- Cleveland: Tab A, too classified for you to get it or what?
- Willens: I have no idea. I can't believe it was any more classified than previous communications to Carver that we were provided with. Without editorializing too much, there wasn't much rhyme or reason in the decisions of the departments as to what to provide or what not to provide.
- Cleveland: This was approved.
- Willens: Whose initials are those?
- Cleveland: It looks like . . .
- Willens: Who was the Undersecretary?
- Cleveland: It looks like Averill Harriman. I don't know what job he had at that time, maybe he was Undersecretary for Political Affairs.
- Willens: Were there any new developments, I mean, that may have prompted this even more expedited effort to have a plebiscite. I don't see much difference between 1967 and 1968. Do you have any recollection as to whether the Solomon Report reaffirmed the need for a plebiscite and to advance it if possible.

- Cleveland: I don't recall what the Solomon Committee said about that. But I think you certainly ought to talk to Solomon.
- Willens: Yes, I want to do that and intend to do that personally. We have another interview scheduled with another member of his group and then I hope to talk to him. Do you recall Interior submitting any report or assessment of the Solomon Report?
- Cleveland: No, not as such, but there was a lot of discussion about it between us.
- Willens: Do you remember participating in some of those discussions?
- Cleveland: Yes, but I don't remember any details about it. This seems to be the document that this is referring to.
- Willens: No, that one is a year later and pertains to another subject. There is some indication in the documents that President Kennedy read the Solomon Report and ordered that it be implemented. Do you have any information as to whether President Kennedy did read the report?
- Cleveland: I don't know whether he read the report.
- Willens: This is now getting very close to the assassination. It was submitted it late October 1963. On that point there is also some indication in the documents that after President Kennedy was assassinated the Interior Department may not have felt the same sense of urgency in examining its policy for the TTPI.
- Cleveland: I wouldn't be surprised.
- Willens: Do you have any recollection one way or another on that point.
- Cleveland: I don't, but I think that we regarded Kennedy as more of an asset for our side of the argument than Johnson was likely to be. Adlai Stevenson had a different view interestingly.
- Willens: How so?
- Cleveland: Well, he told me at one point that after all he and the new President were the same generation in politics and by implication different from this bright young political hero that sort of got in the way of both of their ambitions.
- Willens: What did eventually develop on that score?
- Cleveland: Well, Johnson had him down at the ranch, Johnson consulted him and he took his advice too on coming up to the U.N.. He developed a speech. I went up with the President on a little plane and briefed him about who he was going to meet and soon. And so he was playing the U.N. game the way we thought he ought to play it. But once the election was over in 1964, and the big issue on the table was Vietnam, Adlai was increasingly frozen out of all that. Whenever he came down, and attended a cabinet meeting or a National Security Council meeting, he had to call me up and find out what the score was. I talked to Bill Bundy or others who were involved in it to get him more or less briefed, but there was no love lost at all there. They were the same generation, but from two entirely different orientations.
- Willens: With the change in administration, was there any perceived change in attitudes toward the Trust Territory that you can recall?
- Cleveland: I don't recall any. But I also don't recall any breakthroughs from our point of view, or vigorous educational and economic assistance, or anything of that sort.

- Willens: The correspondence between State and Interior during this period from 1964 through 1966 or thereabouts identifies several issues on which the two agencies seemed to have different views. I would like to just mention them and see if you have a reaction. Some of them you have already spoken to. The first was whether there was a need for change in U.S. policy and you explained why your view and the State Department's view was that there was a need for change. Interior from time to time through Mr. Carver questioned the need for a change. Do you have any recollection of that being Interior's position.
- Cleveland: Yes. I think their position at least from Carver on down was that this was just another American territory and that everything that we thought was important was kind of offstage noise as far as they were concerned.
- Willens: Another issue was whether the people in the Trust Territory themselves wanted change or at least some clarification of their status with the United States. For the most part the State Department papers and other sources suggested that the people out there did want some change. Interior memoranda often contain a contrary view, namely, that the people in Micronesia were quite content with their status at the time. Do you have any recollection of that issue?
- Cleveland: I've a recollection of that issue, but my recollection is that we were both imputing to the people of the territories the view that would support our respective positions on the policy.
- Willens: Is there any fact-finding that went on as to what the people wanted?
- Cleveland: Except for the Solomon Report, I don't recall ever sending anybody out there to test the wind or anything.
- Willens: Another issue of some considerable importance according to the documents was whether the people in the Trust Territory were ready to assume the responsibilities of self-government. The Interior Department raised some concerns on that score and the State Department seems not to have expressed any concern on that score. Do you have a recollection of that?
- Cleveland: Again, that would be as is often the situation in big government—that your views on the substance depend on (who was it who said that where you stand depends on where you sit, which was I think Paul Appleby, my predecessor at Maxwell School)—and because I don't recall any real effort to ascertain the views of the population there.
- Willens: Of their readiness to exercise self-government, whatever that means.
- Cleveland: I think we probably all agree that they weren't very ready, but the point is that we thought that they ought to be gotten ready and Interior people didn't seem to want to get on with that very fast. So we were unlikely to say they are unready, which would serve Interior's purpose, you see. So probably the safest thing to do was to fall silent on that subject.
- Willens: Another issue that was discussed between the agencies was whether independence was one of the options that had to be put before the Micronesians in an act of self-determination. The State Department seems consistently to, at least during the years you were there, take the view that independence needed to be one of the options in order to fulfill U.N. responsibilities. There seemed to be some uncertainty on the Interior side as to whether independence needed to be an option or whether it carried with it more risk. Do you remember any discussion of that issue?
- Cleveland: Yes. While I didn't want to see independence be the answer, I didn't think we could get a credible answer for some kind of association or dependent status without having popped

that other question. And that other question was dangerous until you had enough of the people in the islands getting educated and thinking hard about what was in independence for them.

Willens: Did you think Interior was ready to let independence be one of the options?

Cleveland: No. I think they probably thought the best way to solve that problem was not to ask the question. But we saw dangers in the political fallout from not asking that question.

Willens: The U.N. mission in 1964 did submit a report in May of 1964. It apparently addressed the draft executive order which it was given with respect to the establishment of the Congress of Micronesia. Do you remember participating in any discussions within the Executive Branch about creating a territory-wide legislative body?

Cleveland: Vaguely.

Willens: Did you think the initiative for the Congress of Micronesia may have come from Interior then in moving toward increasing the mechanisms of self-government?

Cleveland: I don't know. It may have been a response to some local leadership.

Willens: The U.N. visiting mission (as had its predecessor in 1961) spoke out strongly against fragmentation of the Trust Territory. When did you become aware of the sentiment in the Marianas for a separate relationship with the United States and what was your sense of that impulse?

Cleveland: Well, that wasn't a strong part of the problem I think while I was in Washington.

Willens: Were you aware of the separatist sentiment?

Cleveland: Yes, but somehow I don't recall that as having being front and center in any of the consideration.

Willens: It certainly was the State Department's view at the time that there was only going to be a single status for all of the Trust Territory and the U.N. visiting mission reports accurately state the U.S. position on the subject. I'm wondering whether you recall any discussions within the Department as to the need to have only a single status or the desirability of differentiating among the different districts.

Cleveland: No, I would say that my recollection is just an assumption that we were talking about one territory because it had been one territory for so long. I became aware (but I think it was after I was no longer responsible for it) of an increasing amount of talk about different options for different folks. But I don't recall ever addressing that question myself.

Willens: I was talking a few minutes ago about some of the issues that were the subject of differences between State and the Interior. A few others have come to mind. One was a concern by Interior about offering the Trust Territory a more desirable status than was available for Guam, the Virgin Islands, and American Samoa. It was often referred to as the "leapfrogging" problem in the sense of leapfrogging those entities and providing the Trust Territory with a better status. Do you have any recollection of discussions of that issue?

Cleveland: Yes. We were always looking for what was the alternative to independence or what form of dependence would be politically acceptable, not only in the territories but out there in the world. It was sort of a changing definition of free association. Also my thought at the time that the situation of Guam and Saipan and so on might not turn out to be so strategically important, and therefore there might not be as strong a case for hanging on to them as there had traditionally been.

- Willens: For hanging on to the territories that were already part of the U.S., like Guam and the Virgin Islands, or do you mean the Trust Territory?
- Cleveland: The Virgin Islands is a different proposition because of its very different history. The interest of the Pacific islands was likely to be sort of subsumed under larger issues such as were we still trying to play a role in the Pacific and that sort of thing. Also there was the very beginning of discussion of what later became the law of the sea negotiations in the late 1970s and 1980s. As we looked forward to that, it was never clear to me that we could make a straight dependent status a permanent part of the landscape. So we had to find some other formula for the other areas and, if we found them in the other areas, it might well be that we would want to find them for Guam too. I was really interested more in the Pacific at that point and not really thinking very hard about the Virgin Islands, which I had never visited until two years ago when we chartered an 85-foot ketch and had a wonderful 50th wedding anniversary cruise around the British Virgins. I'm now much more interested in the Virgin Islands.
- Willens: We did that once.
- Cleveland: Does that make sense to you? It wasn't very well formulated.
- Willens: Yes. The documents suggest that the State Department in the early years of your tenure, when you were trying to work through a new policy, thought that all the territories should be dealt with together—Guam, the Virgin Islands, American Samoa, and the Trust Territory—and to move them all toward a greater measure of self-government. Near the end of your tenure and the few years following your tenure, it looks as though State realized that there was great opposition on the Hill and at Interior to moving all the territories along, so increasingly State focused on the Trust Territory.
- Cleveland: Which is the only thing it had any responsibility for.
- Willens: And which it figured had special claims because of the international obligations to a greater measure of self-government. But the initially packaging of all the territories together was an issue that elicited some opposition from Interior and the Congressional figures.
- Cleveland: Yes. I think the packaging together was probably never a viable starter because the histories are so different.
- Willens: The last issue that emerges from the documents is a question between the agencies as to whether free association is an alternative that can or should be offered to the Micronesians. State increasingly was thinking along those lines as reflected in the documents we've discussed here today. Interior and others recognized that free association was something that had no precedent in the American system, at least as it was being talked about in the Western Pacific, and that there was Congressional opposition to doing anything that was like Puerto Rico. So there was an exchange of views between the agencies as to what free association was, was it something that should be offered, and was there any chance of it being politically acceptable on the Hill.
- Cleveland: Yes. I recall a lot of puzzling about that. But bear in mind the other consideration that was in the heads of those of us who were especially thinking about the future of the U.N., that is, to try to avoid a state of affairs in which every tiny island would be treated as a sovereign—not only because that was nonsense for the territories involved, unless they happened to have a big potash mine or something (which has almost run out by now), but also because of the baleful effect of that on the “one-country, one-vote” situation in the U.N., which has already almost been overtaken by events.
- Willens: All right.

- Cleveland: The way it's been overtaken in the U.N., of course, in practice is that more and more things are done by consensus and fewer and fewer things are done by voting.
- Willens: Just a few further questions about the 1964 U.N. visiting mission report. The report found vagueness and confusion among the Micronesians as to their future political status.
- Cleveland: Not surprising.
- Willens: This refers to our earlier discussion of how one ascertains what their state of mind was.
- Cleveland: That's for cocktail parties and so on.
- Willens: Why wouldn't you at the State Department have accepted the visiting mission's assessment of Micronesian sentiment with respect to their future political status? Or, put another way, did you accept it as an authentic reading of what was really in place out there?
- Cleveland: It stood to reason that that was. Since nobody had really formulated the options for them, and they hadn't formulated it for themselves, it would have been surprising to find them showing a face other than confusion.
- Willens: And uncertainty. That certainly makes sense, viewed from today's perspective. Another point made by the UN visiting mission was related to the economic programs implemented by the United States and may refer back to some of your experience in the aid field. The mission seems to concede that U.S. economic support had substantially increased in recent years since the report in 1961. But then they observed that the increased economic dependence upon the United States would almost certainly result in a request for integration with the United States, if a plebiscite were held, and the mission report suggested that that would not be proper. In other words, they were finding that the economic dependence that had been generated would yield a political outcome that the mission, at least, seemed to have some trouble with. Do you have any reactions to that sentiment?
- Cleveland: Yes. I think the reason that they had trouble with it, though, had very little to do with the South Pacific and had everything to do with South Africa.
- Willens: Could you elaborate on that?
- Cleveland: Well, just that the fact that there were areas of Southern Africa dependent, politically in the case of what came to be Namibia, and economically which was to some extent the case with all the, what would you call them, contiguous states. The danger perceived at that time was that South Africa was so strong economically that it, and South Africa meaning White South Africa at that time, would gradually pull all the other nearby countries into its political orbit and be able thereby to maintain their oppressive policy that was so almost universally unpopular in the U.N. and in the U.S., for that matter. So the idea that economic dependence was a valid reason for wanting to be absorbed was not a precedent that anybody wanted to set in the South Pacific. I don't really think that people were worrying that much about what happened in the South Pacific. I mean, it's like when Yugoslavia started breaking up and the Germans and the Italians wanted very much to recognize Slovenia and Croatia, why didn't the British and the Spaniards have the same view? Well, the Spaniards, they weren't thinking about Yugoslavia, they were thinking about Catalonia and the Basques. And the British were thinking about Scotland and Northern Ireland. Thinking by analogy drives a lot of international relations.
- Willens: That puts a different light on it and makes it somewhat more reasoned or intelligible than the way it reads to an outsider.
- Cleveland: It can be intelligible without being reasoned.

- Willens: The letter that was written to Assistant Secretary Carver dated September 10, 1964, over your signature contains fairly detailed comments on the proposed Secretarial Order creating the Congress of Micronesia. Ultimately the Congress was created sometime in 1965. And I won't review all the specifics here; it lays it out fairly clearly. One thing that sort of interested me was that the letter is dated September 10, 1964, and the first paragraph extends your appreciation for this opportunity to comment on the proposed Secretarial Order. It makes reference to a previous discussion to the effect that the Order would be a significant landmark in the history of the Trust Territory. Who in your Bureau would have carried the laboring oar in commenting on this kind of an Order?
- Cleveland: I think Don McHenry was probably doing the staff work.
- Willens: I see.
- Cleveland: I think if you talk to him about it, he'd have much more recollection. In fact, my general sense as I thought back on that period, is that I have much more recollection of the earlier part, in a sense, before we'd really gotten our Bureau organized with good people in all the slots, which we eventually did with a wonderful staff. By this time, though I signed this letter, I would not have probably participated in it very much. And, in fact, as I look at it, it doesn't stylistically reflect my writing style nearly as much as the earlier one that we were looking at, for example.
- Willens: One of the things that interests me about this letter was that it was dated, I guess, September 16. The Secretarial Order was in fact issued less than two weeks later, on September 28, 1964. Very few of the comments and suggestions contained in this letter were accepted by Interior. The major recommendations here were not reflected in the Secretarial Order. My question is whether Interior rejected these suggestions because they disagreed with them on the merits or because they were tendered at too late a date to find their way into the Secretarial Order. Do you have a view on that?
- Cleveland: Well, probably both. Don McHenry was something more of a firebrand on this subject than his predecessors. He hadn't grown up in the foreign service, but he'd been brought in laterally. Hennis was a young foreign service officer doing his job. So McHenry had more emotional involvement in this kind of colonialism issue. And my guess is that all these points had been put at lower levels, in the staff levels, to the Interior people and the Interior people were fairly familiar with him and didn't agree with him and said so to their bosses and so forth. And this was just sort of a final salvo.
- Willens: At the assistant secretary level.
- Cleveland: Yes, at the assistant secretary level.
- Willens: I see.
- Cleveland: The thrust of these recommendations is to make the legislature a more real thing.
- Willens: Yes, that's certainly the thrust of it and these issues came back time and time again after the Congress was in fact created and began operating. In any of your later assignments, particularly when you were at the University of Hawaii, did you have any opportunity to evaluate the operations of the Congress of Micronesia?
- Cleveland: Not really. Of course, we got some news about it and visitors to the islands would generally come and visit with me about it. But I don't really have a clear sense of how it was working or who was who. I had my own problems running a nine-campus university system.
- Willens: You had a fairly difficult time, as I recall.

- Cleveland: Yes.
- Willens: The last document, Mr. Cleveland, is the draft statement that was prepared to be delivered by you before the House Subcommittee on the Territories on June 1, 1965. I wonder whether you in fact remember delivering a version of this statement on that occasion.
- Cleveland: No, I don't have a specific recollection of it. But since I spent quite a lot of my time commuting to Capitol Hill for one purpose or another, the fact that this doesn't stand out in memory is not very significant. I mean it doesn't mean it didn't happen.
- Willens: Is the handwriting recognizable on the first page and a few other pages? Some of the editing on the first page may be by the people who were reviewing this for clearance purposes in connection with production.
- Cleveland: Yes. It was reviewed by Ernest Lindley. It was while he was Assistant Secretary for Congressional Relations.
- Willens: Did you have a chance to review this particular statement?
- Cleveland: I didn't get to this one.
- Willens: It basically covers much of the subject matter that you have covered here today, focusing almost exclusively on the international obligations that the United States assumed in becoming a trustee for this Territory. I'd be particularly interested if you have any recollection as to, beyond what you've already said, as to the reaction of members of Congress to this kind of presentation.
- Cleveland: Well, I don't recall this session at all. But looking at it now, I'm not surprised that it was classified. And I think that it was presented in an executive session.
- Willens: That seems to have been the case almost regularly and so we have very few such statements.
- Cleveland: In that case, there is some analysis of the analogies with Guam and with other dependencies, which is the kind of thing we never talked about in public. This style is more like mine, so I may have participated more.
- Willens: There is a reference here to the U.N. Special Committee and of course that Committee figures over the next several years as a principal focus of criticism with respect to U.S. policy in the Trust Territory. When did the Special Committee come to your attention as an aspect of the United Nations that needed to be responded to?
- Cleveland: I don't recall when this Special Committee started, but it wasn't essentially different from the drum fire that was going on all the time.
- Willens: I may be misreading. On page ten, there's a reference to "using the colonial declaration as its primary mandate, the U.N. Special Committee on Colonialism last year began an extended discussion of U.S. territories." I guess the point is whether the Committee of 24 at some time in 1963 began to turn its focus on U.S. territories and that in turn required more attention by your Office in dealing with it.
- Cleveland: Well, I think it probably did. But the same kind of rhetoric was in the speeches at the General Assembly every year.
- Willens: I see.
- Cleveland: Cubans always mentioned Puerto Rico, and so forth.
- Willens: It's hard for people today to understand why the United Nations loomed so large as a factor in decision-making in the early 1960s. It's been suggested to me that this phase

lapsed near the end of the decade—that the United Nations became less important by 1970. I just wanted to solicit your views about the United Nations factors and why it was in the 1960s, when you were there, that they loomed large because a decade or two later it seems not to have played such an important role in the formation of U.S. policy.

Cleveland: Well, there are two reasons, one international and one domestic. There was a U.N. angle to every issue—just about every issue really, and one with few exceptions. And I think in the almost five years I was in that job in Washington, I had a perfect record of playing some role, sometimes a bit part, in every peace and security crisis anywhere in the world. Because it always came up in the U.N., or something had happened in the U.N. before, or we could figure out what other countries meant by what they were saying by consulting with them at the U.N. rather than in their capital—in the U.N. and in their capital. So it was very relevant at that time to every issue—even Vietnam. We had all sorts of plays back and forth with U Thant and so on about Vietnam. I remember Dean Rusk at one point, in a telephone conversation with U Thant which I was listening in at the other end of. In a rare moment of sort of getting definably angry, which he was very good at not doing, he said: “What do you think you are? A country?” which probably took U Thant aback some. So although the White House staff and people in other parts of the State Department were not obviously as concerned with the U.N. angle as I was, since I was responsible for it, we sometimes had to remind the White House staff that they shouldn’t do this before going through some process in the U.N.. It was inherently the case. Compounding that was the fact that this very well-known Democrat of the left was up there as our gladiator. At the beginning of the Kennedy Administration, he was much better known internationally than Kennedy was. Kennedy made every effort to make sure that he was consulted and kept on board and kept happy. When Jackie would go up to New York and go to the theatre, Adlai would be her escort. And so cameras would be clicking and they’d both be, at least Adlai would be, very happy about it.

Willens: I would be too.

Cleveland: And she was, indeed, a charming companion. So it was a good deal from both sides, I think. Adlai had sort of a pattern of grouching and saying: “I can’t stand this a minute longer,” and “How can anybody stay in a job like this,” and so forth. He’d say this to whoever his dinner partner happened to be. The first two or three times this happened, it really worried me. And I’d go up and talk with George Ball, who was an old pal of Adlai Stevenson’s, and he’d say: “Pay no attention to him; he’s not going to resign.” And I didn’t think that the people who thought he was about to resign when he was struck down by a heart attack on a London street were wrong. I had spent the previous three days with him and that wasn’t going to happen. But the point is that, especially in the first two or three years (in other words, in the Kennedy Administration), it would have been literally disastrous for Kennedy, who had won the presidency by only a few hundred thousand votes, to have the whole left wing of the party just disappear with an Adlai Stevenson resignation. I think it was a bigger contingency than even Adlai realized. Some of his friends and especially later in the Johnson Administration, when Norman Cousins and a good many others were urging him to resign, with *éclat*, you know, on the Vietnam issue, it would have been a major stab wound for a Democratic president to have this very popular and symbolic figure going to the opposition, kind of on the left. And so, they even cleared Illinois judgeships with him, for example. I had a little problem at the beginning, because that kind of thing was done through Arthur Schlesinger, who was on the White House staff. For a few weeks Arthur Schlesinger thought he was in charge of U.N. affairs also. I finally made a date and went over and visited him and said: “Look, Arthur, we can have

a two-China policy,” which we were then discussing about, “but we can’t have a two-IO policy.” And once the air was cleared, then we worked very well together. In fact, the only part of the State Department that comes off smelling like roses in Arthur’s book about the Kennedy Administration, *A Thousand Days*, is my Bureau, because he really knew what was going on in that part.

Willens: It was on the merits, of course.

Cleveland: It was on the merits, of course. It was also because he knew what was going on and he understood it, whereas he didn’t understand a lot of what else was going on, because it wasn’t important enough. He also understood that Latin America was, I think correctly, critical on that part. So, it was a combination of the fact that the U.N. was still, at that time, very important in our foreign policy and in everybody else’s foreign policy—that’s very important, including ours, because we were most important. But that that factor, that force, went in the same direction as the domestic political force, and the two of them together made the U.N. desk a very exciting place to be for those five years.

Willens: In your last year in State, the Department staff seemed to be busy developing and producing a planning paper that was more or less designed to collect all of the learning in one place and present a set of recommendations to the other agencies. Ultimately the planning paper was presented to both Defense and Interior.

Cleveland: About the...

Willens: About the Trust Territory, generally. Do you have any recollection of a planning process going on during 1965, as you concluded your assignment there?

Cleveland: Yes, that was part of a much larger and more ambitious scheme. I knew that I was leaving the job. I felt that we should sort of round up some story of what we’d done—the main things that were likely to have a future, issues that were likely to have a future—and leave it as a sort of legacy. Most of the planning in the State Department doesn’t take place in the Policy Planning Staff. It takes place in the operating bureaus. And the Policy Planning Staff didn’t have nearly the standing on any U.N. subject that we did. So that was the obvious place to do the work.

Willens: There were several propositions advanced in the planning document. Let me try to summarize them and elicit a response. The documents suggest that the Micronesian matter should be handled in absolute secrecy. A high premium was placed on developing and implementing the policy in a fully classified format. That’s consistent with what you said earlier, I think.

Cleveland: Yes. It’s an unrealistic hope in a big government agency. I think it best, but there were so many sensitivities involved, both internationally and domestically, that you couldn’t just sort of have a wide open debate about just how far along the spectrum from dependence to independence you wanted to set your marker. Because that was really the question. And there were, you know, zealots on independence and zealots on dependence. It was a little like trying to have a rational view on abortion these days. You just couldn’t do that in public.

Willens: Another principle reflected in the paper was that there was a more favorable Congress as a result of the 1964 election that might be more receptive to the revised policy that State was advocating. Do you recall any assessment of Congressional sentiment that was weighed in?

Cleveland: I don’t recall specifically in this context. There was a general assessment that Congress

- would be easier to deal with because there were more Democrats for a Democratic Administration.
- Willens: The planning paper also continues to urge White House involvement, namely to designate someone in the White House to take action responsibility. That continued to be a theme.
- Cleveland: Well, that was the same problem. We wanted the actions—not just sort of big policy, national security memoranda but day-to-day actions—to be handled by somebody who would not share the Interior Department’s rather conservative (and Kennedy would probably say “colonialist”) view—and yet we couldn’t really reach for that responsibility ourselves because the State Department was not in a position to do that. So, the best thing was to get somebody like us in the White House doing it, you see.
- Willens: Now, there’s one note on a State Department document (and I don’t have it with me) that reflects the idea that having a czar is generally a good idea if he’s going to agree with you.
- Cleveland: Right.
- Willens: And someone suggested if he’s going to be our czar, let’s support it.
- Cleveland: Right.
- Willens: There was a cynical or realistic view reflected in the note.
- Cleveland: I can readily imagine that I wrote such a note.
- Willens: It definitely does say “czar.”
- Cleveland: If I didn’t, I’m sorry that I didn’t, because I think that’s a good political analysis.
- Willens: One of the concluding themes of the State Department planning effort was “let’s get the job done the way we want to and then we’ll seek approval from the U.N..” There was a sense that international acquiescence could be achieved if one proceeded in an orderly coordinated way to do the kinds of things in the Trust Territory that you were espousing.
- Cleveland: Well, but it’s always thus. I mean, if you don’t have your own act together (and getting our own act together in the U.S. government was, is very difficult), you don’t get a good response. We had a lot of influence and a lot of good will, really, in the world and most of the countries in the UN had a lot of different kinds of political business with the U.S. and the South Pacific was out there on the edge of the screen somewhere. So most people would go along with what we wanted to do, if we were clear that that’s what we wanted to do. And if you didn’t have Congressional voices saying one thing, and Interior saying something else, and the State Department saying something else, and people debating it on the then-equivalent of the talk shows, and so forth. If we produced enough confusion in our politics about it, then we would generate confusion and opposition abroad. If we could get our ducks in a row, then we could probably get them to march in the right direction. That was, I think, the theory and I think that’s probably inherently the case.
- Willens: I can conclude by asking you to speculate, if you feel free to, with the wisdom of hindsight after thirty years. As you know, the Trust Territory ultimately ended up in four separate entities, with the Northern Mariana Islands being part of the United States as a Commonwealth and the other districts consolidating into the Marshall Islands, Palau, and the Federated States of Micronesia—each of which is in a free association relationship with the United States, with a few fine points still to be worked out with respect to Palau. So thirty years later, the forces of separatism, to some extent, carried the day and I wonder whether you have any judgment you would offer as to whether this outcome is one that

you think achieves the goals of national security interest and self-government that you were advocating during your years at State.

Cleveland: Well, I think on the whole it probably did. We didn't consider as seriously in those days as happened later on, that the islands, which after all cover an enormous territory geographically, would split apart and would develop some emotion around a concept like the Northern Marianas. But, on the whole, the basic thing that we were always trying to do was to make sure that the islands weren't just sort of spun off and therefore available as Japanese or other colonies—or even Russian, of course, which was a big issue of that day. Now the only problem is whether Russia will become a Pacific power and wind up giving up of those islands north of Japan. Which is paradoxically the way to become a Pacific power—to handle that right with the Japanese. So our objective was to prevent a complete independence, but also to prevent a dependent status that would be so frankly colonial that it would be vulnerable to criticism from elsewhere; and not only because that would be embarrassing and Congress wouldn't like it and so on, but also because it would make us less influential and effective on some really important issues like the South Africa issue looked at the time. While I wouldn't have designed the outcome just the way it's come about, I think those two criteria of success, that is, not completely independent but not offensively dependent, is about where we have come out.

Willens: On that note we'll end the interview, and thank you very much.