



## **Compact of Free Association: Critical to America's Defense**

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In light of the escalating nuclear threat from North Korea and the proliferation of nuclear weapons and missile technology across Asia, access to critical missile defense related installations and facilities on Kwajalein Atoll in the Marshall Islands is important to America's defense.

Because of this national security benefit, the U.S. Congress should renew the Compact of Free Association (CFA) between the United States, the Republic of the Marshall Islands, and the Federated States of Micronesia, together known as the Freely Associated States (FAS).

### **Location, Location, Location**

Technically, the Compact was due to expire in 2001, but it was extended for two years ending on September 30, 2003 while negotiations progressed. The U.S. Congress and the FAS are now weighing the benefits of signing a renewed CFA that, among other things, would include an extension of the United States' use of the Marshall Islands' Kwajalein Atoll for missile defense testing.

The United States national security would benefit greatly from Compact renewal. The three most important elements of real estate are location, location, location and the FAS – spread across vast areas of the Pacific – have all three.

**First**, the Compact permits the United States to continue to deny access of foreign militaries to the half a million square miles of Pacific Ocean between Guam and Hawaii.

**Second**, under present arrangements the U.S. can keep its Ronald Reagan Missile Defense Test Site on the Kwajalein Atoll in the Marshall Islands until 2016. If the Compact is signed the Marshall Islands have offered to extend the United States' stay until 2066, with the option for the U.S. to add an additional 20 years and remain until 2086. This testing site is of the utmost importance for the U.S. According to a Department of Defense assessment, the facilities on Kwajalein Atoll are a "national asset" – currently the only facility in the world with sufficient room for full scale testing of long-range missiles. The U.S. has completed a number of successful missile defense tests from the Kwajalein site, including tests of Ground Based Interceptors.

**Third**, Kwajalein is uniquely situated for intelligence gathering and provides support for America's space programs.

### **Expires September 30**

The Bush Administration places great importance on missile defense and should fully support the extension of U.S. use of the Kwajalein site included in the new Compact of Free Association. Additionally, by re-ratifying the CFA, Congress would sustain the United States' close ties with the Marshall Islands and the Federated States of Micronesia -- two important allies and emerging democracies. Now that Congress is back in session, it should work to quickly push through the CFA before the current Compact expires on September 30. The benefits of the Compact to both parties are manifest.

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