

GAO

Testimony
Before the Committee on Resources,
House of Representatives

For Release on Delivery
Expected at 9:30 a.m. EDT
Thursday, July 10, 2003

**COMPACT OF FREE
ASSOCIATION**

**An Assessment of the
Amended Compacts and
Related Agreements**

Statement of Susan S. Westin, Managing Director
International Affairs and Trade





Highlights of [GAO-03-988T](#), a testimony before the House Committee on Resources

COMPACT OF FREE ASSOCIATION

An Assessment of the Amended Compacts and Related Agreements

Why GAO Did This Study

In 1986, the United States entered into a Compact of Free Association with the Pacific Island nations of the Federated States of Micronesia, or FSM, and the Republic of the Marshall Islands, or RMI. The Compact provided about \$2.1 billion in U.S. funds, supplied by the Department of the Interior, over 17 years (1987-2003) to the FSM and the RMI. These funds were intended to advance economic development. In a past report, GAO found that this assistance did little to advance economic development in either country, and accountability over funding was limited. The Compact also established U.S. defense rights and obligations in the region and allowed for migration from both countries to the United States.

The three parties recently renegotiated expiring economic assistance provisions of the Compact in order to provide an additional 20 years of assistance (2004-2023). In addition, the negotiations addressed defense and immigration issues. The House International Relations and Resources Committees requested that GAO report on Compact negotiations.

This testimony discusses negotiated changes to the levels and structure of future assistance, including the potential cost to the U.S. government. Further, it reviews accountability, defense, and immigration changes brought about by the amended Compacts and related agreements.

www.gao.gov/cgi-bin/getrpt?GAO-03-988T.

To view the full product, including the scope and methodology, click on the link above. For more information, contact Susan S. Westin at (202) 512-4148 or WestinS@gao.gov.

What GAO Found

The amended Compacts of Free Association between the United States and the FSM and the RMI to renew expiring U.S. assistance could potentially cost the U.S. government about \$6.6 billion in new authorizations from the Congress. Of this amount, \$3.5 billion would cover payments over a 20-year period (2004-2023), while \$3.1 billion represents payments for U.S. military access to Kwajalein Atoll in the RMI for the years 2024 through 2086. While the level of annual grant assistance to both countries would decrease each year, contributions to trust funds—meant to eventually replace grant funding—would increase annually by a comparable amount. Nevertheless, at an assumed annual 6 percent rate of return, earnings from the FSM trust fund would be unable to replace expiring grant assistance in 2024, while earnings from the RMI trust fund would encounter the same problem by 2040.

The amended Compacts strengthen reporting and monitoring measures that could improve accountability over assistance, if diligently implemented. These measures include the following: assistance grants would be targeted to priority areas such as health and education; annual reporting and consultation requirements would be expanded; and funds could be withheld for noncompliance with grant terms and conditions. The successful implementation of the many new accountability provisions will require appropriate resources and sustained commitment from the United States, the FSM, and the RMI.

Regarding defense, U.S. military access to Kwajalein Atoll in the RMI would be extended from 2016 through 2066, with an option to extend through 2086. Finally, Compact provisions addressing immigration have been strengthened. For example, FSM and RMI citizens entering the United States would need to carry a passport, and the U.S. Attorney General could, through regulations, specify the time and conditions of admission to the United States for these citizens.

Estimated New U.S. Authorizations for the FSM and the RMI, Fiscal Years 2004-2086 (U.S. dollars in millions)

	FSM	RMI	Total
Fiscal years 2004-2023	\$2,296	\$1,204	\$3,500
Fiscal years 2024-2086	Not applicable	3,081	3,081
<i>Fiscal years 2004-2086, total possible new U.S. authorizations for the FSM and the RMI</i>	\$2,296	\$4,285	\$6,581

Source: GAO estimate based on information in the amended Compacts.

Note: These figures are adjusted for inflation. In 2004 U.S. dollars, the total cost would be \$3.8 billion.

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Committee:

I am pleased to be here today to testify on the Compact of Free Association between the United States and the Pacific Island nations of the Federated States of Micronesia, or the FSM, and the Republic of the Marshall Islands, or the RMI.¹ In 1986, the United States entered into this Compact with the two countries after almost 40 years of administering the islands under the United Nations Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands. The Compact has provided U.S. assistance to the FSM and the RMI in the form of direct funding as well as federal services and programs for almost 17 years. Further, the Compact establishes U.S. defense rights and obligations in the region and allows for migration from both countries to the United States. Provisions of the Compact that address economic assistance were scheduled to expire in 2001; however, they can remain and have remained in effect while the United States and each nation renegotiated the affected provisions.²

Today I will discuss our review of the amended Compacts and related agreements that the United States signed with the FSM and the RMI in May and April of 2003, respectively. (According to a Department of State official, while the original Compact was one document that applied to both the FSM and the RMI, the Compact that has been amended is now a separate Compact with each nation.) Specifically, I will discuss changes to levels and structure of future assistance, including the potential cost to the U.S. government. Further, I will comment on changes in accountability and other key issues addressed in the amended Compacts and related agreements.

Summary

The amended Compacts of Free Association with the FSM and the RMI to renew expiring assistance would require about \$3.5 billion in funding over the next 20 years with a total possible authorization through 2086 of

¹The FSM had a population of about 107,000 in 2000, while the RMI had a population of 50,840 in 1999, according to each country's most recent census.

²Other Compact provisions are also due to expire in late 2003 if not renewed. These include (1) certain defense provisions, such as the requirement that the FSM and the RMI refrain from actions that the United States determines are incompatible with U.S. defense obligations (the defense veto) and (2) federal services listed in the Compact.

\$6.6 billion from the U.S. Congress.³ The amended Compacts would provide decreasing levels of annual assistance over a 20-year term (2004-2023) in order to encourage budgetary self-reliance. Simultaneously, the Compacts would require building up a trust fund (with contributions that would increase annually) for each country to generate annual earnings that would replace the grants that end in 2023. Per capita grant assistance would fall over the 20-year period, particularly for the RMI. At an assumed trust fund rate of return of 6 percent, in 2024 the RMI trust fund would cover expiring grant assistance, while the FSM trust fund would be insufficient to replace grants. By the year 2040, however, RMI trust fund returns also would be unable to replace grant funding.

The amended Compacts include many strengthened reporting and monitoring measures that could improve accountability if diligently implemented. The amended Compacts and related agreements have addressed most of the recommendations that we have made in past reports regarding assistance accountability. For example, assistance would be provided through grants targeted to priority areas, such as health and education, and with specific terms and conditions attached. Annual reporting and consultation requirements would be expanded, and funds could be withheld for noncompliance with Compact terms and conditions. However, the successful implementation of the many new accountability provisions will require a sustained commitment and appropriate resources from the United States, the FSM, and the RMI.

The amended Compacts address other key issues. One key change to Compact defense provisions would occur—U.S. military access to Kwajalein Atoll in the RMI could be extended from 2016 to 2086. This extension would cost \$3.4 billion of the total possible authorization of \$6.6 billion. Further, amended Compact provisions on immigration have been strengthened. FSM and RMI citizens entering the United States would need to carry a passport, and regulations could be promulgated that would impose time limits and other conditions on admission to the United States for these citizens.

³Although the amended Compacts have been signed by the U.S., FSM, and RMI governments, they have not been approved by the legislature of any country. Therefore, in our testimony we describe the amended Compacts' requirements and potential impact in a conditional manner in recognition that the Compacts have not yet been enacted. The total possible cost to renew expiring assistance in fiscal year 2004 U.S. dollars would be \$3.8 billion on the basis of the Congressional Budget Office's forecasted inflation rate.

Background

The 1986 Compact of Free Association between the United States, the FSM, and the RMI provided a framework for the United States to work toward achieving its three main goals: (1) to secure self-government for the FSM and the RMI, (2) to assist the FSM and the RMI in their efforts to advance economic development and self-sufficiency, and (3) to ensure certain national security rights for all of the parties. The first goal has been met. The FSM and the RMI are independent nations and are members of international organizations such as the United Nations.

The second goal of the Compact—advancing economic development and self-sufficiency for both countries—was to be accomplished primarily through U.S. direct financial payments (to be disbursed and monitored by the U.S. Department of the Interior) to the FSM and the RMI. For 1987 through 2003, U.S. assistance to the FSM and the RMI to support economic development is estimated, on the basis of Interior data, to be about \$2.1 billion.⁴ Economic self-sufficiency has not been achieved. Although total U.S. assistance (Compact direct funding as well as U.S. programs and services) as a percentage of total government revenue has fallen in both countries (particularly in the FSM), the two nations remain highly dependent on U.S. funds. U.S. direct assistance has maintained standards of living that are higher than could be achieved in the absence of U.S. support. Further, the U.S., FSM, and RMI governments provided little accountability over Compact expenditures.

The third goal of the Compact—securing national security rights for all parties—has been achieved. The Compact obligates the United States to defend the FSM and the RMI against an attack or the threat of attack in the same way it would defend its own citizens. The Compact also provides the United States with the right of “strategic denial,” the ability to prevent access to the islands and their territorial waters by the military personnel of other countries or the use of the islands for military purposes. In

⁴The cost of prior assistance in fiscal year 2004 U.S. dollars was \$2.6 billion. This estimate does not include payments for Compact-authorized federal services or U.S. military use of Kwajalein Atoll land, nor does it include investment development funds provided under section 111 of Public Law 99-239. Additionally, the Compact served as the vehicle to reach a full settlement of all compensation claims related to U.S. nuclear tests conducted on Marshallese atolls between 1946 and 1958. In a Compact-related agreement, the U.S. government agreed to provide \$150 million to create a trust fund. While the Compact and its related agreements represented the full settlement of all nuclear claims, it provided the RMI with the right to submit a petition of “changed circumstance” to the U.S. Congress requesting additional compensation. The RMI government submitted such a petition in September 2000, which the U.S. executive branch is still reviewing.

addition, the Compact grants the United States a “defense veto.” Finally, through a Compact-related agreement, the United States secured continued access to military facilities on Kwajalein Atoll in the RMI through 2016.⁵ In a previous report, we identified Kwajalein Atoll as the key U.S. defense interest in the two countries.⁶ Of these rights, only the defense veto is due to expire in 2003 if not renewed.

Another aspect of the special relationship between the FSM and the RMI and the United States involves the unique immigration rights that the Compact grants. Through the original Compact, citizens of both nations are allowed to live and work in the United States as “nonimmigrants” and can stay for long periods of time, with few restrictions.⁷ Further, the Compact exempted FSM and RMI citizens from meeting U.S. passport, visa, and labor certification requirements when entering the United States. In recognition of the potential adverse impacts that Hawaii and nearby U.S. commonwealths and territories could face as a result of an influx of FSM and RMI citizens, the Congress authorized Compact impact payments to address the financial impact of these nonimmigrants on Guam, Hawaii, and the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands (CNMI).⁸ By 1998, more than 13,000 FSM and RMI citizens had made use of the Compact immigration provisions and were living in the three areas. The governments of the three locations have provided the U.S. government with annual Compact nonimmigrant impact estimates; for example, in 2000 the total estimated impact for the three areas was \$58.2 million. In

⁵U.S. access to Kwajalein Atoll is established through the U.S.-RMI Military Use and Operating Rights Agreement (MUORA). Funding provided for U.S. military access to Kwajalein for the years 1987 to 2003 is estimated, on the basis of Interior data, to be \$64 million for development assistance and \$144 million for the RMI government to compensate landowners for U.S. use of their lands.

⁶See U.S. General Accounting Office, *Foreign Relations: Kwajalein Atoll Is the Key U.S. Defense Interest in Two Micronesian Nations*, GAO-02-119 (Washington, D.C.: Jan. 22, 2002).

⁷Typically, nonimmigrants include those individuals who are in the United States temporarily as visitors, students, or workers.

⁸Payments were also authorized for American Samoa, but impact compensation has not been sought.

that year, Guam received \$7.58 million in impact funding, while the other two areas received no funding.⁹

In the fall of 1999, the United States and the two Pacific Island nations began negotiating economic assistance and defense provisions of the Compact that were due to expire. Immigration issues were also addressed. According to the Department of State, the aims of the amended Compacts are to (1) continue economic assistance to advance self-reliance, while improving accountability and effectiveness; (2) continue the defense relationship, including a 50-year lease extension (beyond 2016) of U.S. military access to Kwajalein Atoll in the RMI; (3) strengthen immigration provisions; and (4) provide assistance to lessen the impact of Micronesian migration on Hawaii, Guam, and the CNMI.

Amended Compacts Would Alter Assistance Levels and Structure

Under the amended Compacts with the FSM and the RMI, new congressional authorizations of approximately \$3.5 billion in funding would be required over the next 20 years, with a total possible authorization through 2086 of \$6.6 billion. Economic assistance would be provided to the two countries for 20 years—from 2004 through 2023—with all subsequent funding directed to the RMI for continued U.S. access to military facilities in that country. Under the U.S. proposals, annual grant amounts to each country would be reduced each year in order to encourage budgetary self-reliance and transition the countries from receiving annual U.S. grant funding to receiving annual trust fund earnings. This decrease in grant funding, combined with FSM and RMI population growth, would also result in falling per capita grant assistance over the funding period—particularly for the RMI. If the trust funds established in the amended Compacts earn a 6 percent rate of return, the FSM trust fund would be insufficient to replace expiring annual grants. The RMI trust fund would replace grants in fiscal year 2024 but would become insufficient for this purpose by fiscal year 2040.

Amended Compacts Could Cost the U.S. Government \$6.6 Billion

Under the amended Compacts with the FSM and the RMI, new congressional authorizations of approximately \$6.6 billion could be required for U.S. payments from fiscal years 2004 to 2086, of which \$3.5 billion would be required for the first 20 years of the Compacts

⁹See U.S. General Accounting Office, *Foreign Relations: Migration From Micronesian Nations Has Had Significant Impact on Guam, Hawaii, and the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands*, [GAO-02-40](#) (Washington, D.C.: Oct. 5, 2001).

(see table 1). The share of new authorizations to the FSM would be about \$2.3 billion and would end after fiscal year 2023. The share of new authorizations to the RMI would be about \$1.2 billion for the first 20 years, with about \$300 million related to extending U.S. military access to Kwajalein Atoll through 2023. Further funding of \$3.1 billion for the remainder of the period corresponds to extended grants to Kwajalein and payments related to U.S. military use of land at Kwajalein Atoll.¹⁰ The cost of this \$6.6 billion new authorization, expressed in fiscal year 2004 U.S. dollars, would be \$3.8 billion.

This new authorized funding would be provided to each country in the form of (1) annual grant funds targeted to priority areas (such as health, education, and infrastructure); (2) contributions to a trust fund for each country such that trust fund earnings would become available to the FSM and the RMI in fiscal year 2024 to replace expiring annual grants; (3) payments the U.S. government makes to the RMI government that the RMI transfers to Kwajalein landowners to compensate them for the U.S. use of their lands for defense sites; and (4) an extension of federal services that have been provided under the original Compact but are due to expire in fiscal year 2003.

¹⁰U.S. access to Kwajalein Atoll in the RMI has already been secured through 2016 through a Compact-related agreement. The amended Compact with the RMI extends this funding to 2066, with an additional 20-year optional lease extension at that point.

Table 1: Estimated New U.S. Authorizations for the FSM and the RMI, Fiscal Years 2004-2086 (U.S. dollars in millions)

	FSM	RMI	Total
Fiscal years 2004-2023			
Grants for priority areas	\$1,612	\$701 ^a	\$2,313
Trust fund contributions	517	276	793
Payments for U.S. military use of Kwajalein Atoll land ^b	Not applicable	191	191
Compact-authorized federal services ^c	167	37	204
New U.S. authorization for 2004-2023	2,296	1,204	3,500
Fiscal years 2024-2086			
Grants to Kwajalein	Not applicable	948 ^a	948
Payments for U.S. military use of Kwajalein Atoll land	Not applicable	2,133	2,133
New U.S. authorization for 2024-2086	Not applicable	3,081	3,081
Fiscal years 2004-2086, total new U.S. authorizations for the FSM and the RMI	\$2,296	\$4,285	\$6,581

Source: GAO estimate based on information in the amended Compacts. Under the amended Compacts, U.S. payments are adjusted for inflation at two-thirds of the percentage change in the U.S. gross domestic product implicit price deflator.

Note: Numbers may not sum due to rounding.

^aThe 1986 U.S.-RMI Military Use and Operating Rights Agreement (MUORA) grants the United States access to certain portions of Kwajalein Atoll and provides \$24.7 million of funding for development and impact on Kwajalein from 2004 to 2016. Approximately \$112 million of the new proposed U.S. grant assistance of \$701 million is for increasing this funding to Kwajalein from 2004 to 2016 and for continuation of the increased level of funding through 2066 and possibly to 2086 if the agreement is extended.

^bAs part of the 1986 MUORA, the RMI government has also allocated \$162 million of U.S. funding from 2004 to 2016 under this agreement to landowners via a traditional distribution system to compensate them for the U.S. use of their lands for defense sites. The amended Compact increases these payments from 2004 to 2016 and continues the increased level of payments through 2066 and possibly to 2086 if the agreement is extended.

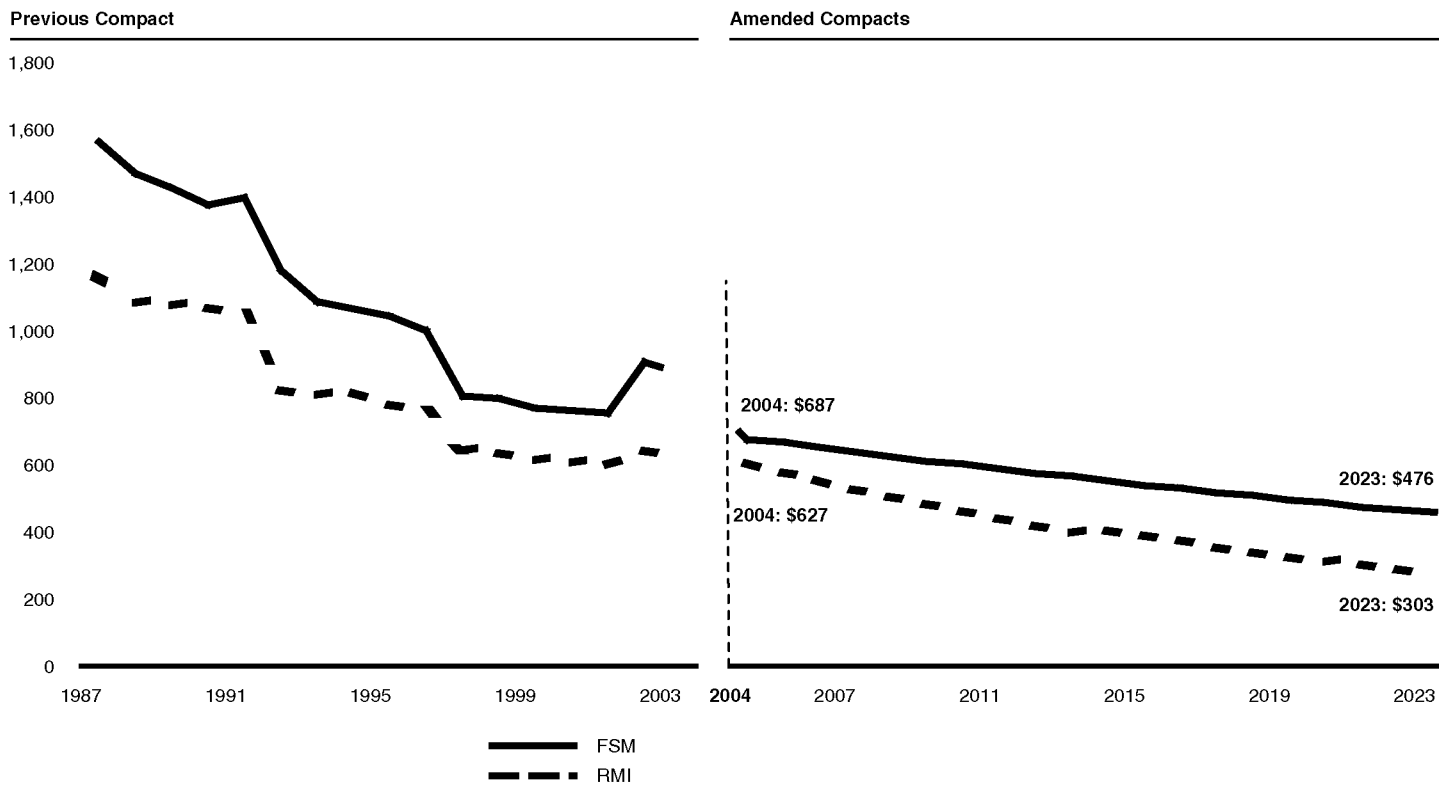
^cFederal services authorized in the Compact include weather, aviation, and postal services. Services associated with the Federal Emergency Management Agency have been excluded. An estimate of assistance from the U.S. Agency for International Development's Office of Disaster Assistance has not been included.

Amended Compacts Would Reduce U.S. Grant Support Annually

Under the U.S. proposals, annual grant amounts to each country would be reduced each year in order to encourage budgetary self-reliance and transition the countries from receiving annual U.S. grant funding to receiving annual trust fund earnings. Thus, the amended Compacts increase annual U.S. contributions to the trust funds each year by the grant reduction amount. This decrease in grant funding, combined with FSM and RMI population growth, would also result in falling per capita grant assistance over the funding period—particularly for the RMI (see fig. 1). Using published U.S. Census population growth rate projections for the two countries, the real value of grants per capita to the FSM would begin

at an estimated \$687 in fiscal year 2004 and would further decrease over the course of the Compact to \$476 in fiscal year 2023. The real value of grants per capita to the RMI would begin at an estimated \$627 in fiscal year 2004 and would further decrease to an estimated \$303 in fiscal year 2023. The reduction in real per capita funding over the next 20 years is a continuation of the decreasing amount of available grant funds (in real terms) that the FSM and the RMI had during the 17 years of prior Compact assistance.

Figure 1: Estimated FSM and RMI Per Capita Grant Assistance for Fiscal Years 1987-2023 (Fiscal Year 2004 U.S. Dollars)



Source: GAO analysis of amended Compacts.

Note: This analysis includes only Compact funds available to governments. Therefore, the analysis excludes investment development funds provided under section 111 of Public Law 99-239, trust fund contributions, federal programs and services, audit assistance, and MUORA-related lease payments that the RMI government transfers to Kwajalein landowners. U.S. Census population historical and projected population growth rates are used in conjunction with the most recent country Census data. U.S. Census projections are subject to revision.

The decline in annual grant assistance could impact FSM and RMI government budget and service provision, employment prospects, migration, and the overall gross domestic product (GDP) outlook, though the immediate effect is likely to differ between the two countries. For example, the FSM is likely to experience fiscal pressures in 2004, when the value of Compact grant assistance drops in real terms by 8 percent relative to the 2001 level (a reduction equal to 3 percent of GDP).¹¹ For the RMI, however, the proposed level of Compact grant assistance in 2004 would actually be 8 percent higher in real terms than the 2001 level (an increase equal to 3 percent of GDP). According to the RMI, this increase would likely be allocated largely to the infrastructure investment budget and would provide a substantial stimulus to the economy in the first years of the new Compact.

Trust Funds May Be Insufficient to Replace Expiring Grants

The amended Compacts were designed to build trust funds that, beginning in fiscal year 2024, yield annual earnings to replace grant assistance that ends in 2023. Both the FSM and the RMI are required to provide an initial contribution to their respective trust funds of \$30 million. In designing the trust funds, the Department of State assumed that the trust fund would earn a 6 percent rate of return.¹² The amended Compacts do not address whether trust fund earnings should be sufficient to cover expiring federal services, but they do create a structure that sets aside earnings above 6 percent, should they occur, that could act as a buffer against years with low or negative trust fund returns. Importantly, whether the estimated value of the proposed trust funds would be sufficient to replace grants or create a buffer account would depend on the rate of return that is realized.¹³

- If the trust funds earn a 6 percent rate of return, then the FSM trust fund would yield a return of \$57 million in fiscal year 2023, an amount insufficient to replace expiring grants by an estimated value of \$27 million.

¹¹The level of grant assistance in 2001 was converted into fiscal year 2004 dollars for comparison purposes.

¹²The State Department chose a 6 percent return in order to reflect a conservative investment strategy. This rate of return can be compared with the current average forecasted return for long-term U.S. government bonds of 5.8 percent by the Congressional Budget Office.

¹³This analysis does not take into account volatile or negative returns. The sufficiency of either the FSM or the RMI trust fund to replace grants has not been tested under conditions of market volatility.

The RMI trust fund would yield a return of \$33 million in fiscal year 2023, an estimated \$5 million above the amount required to replace grants in fiscal year 2024. Nevertheless, the RMI trust fund would become insufficient for replacing grant funding by fiscal year 2040.

- If the trust funds are comprised of both stocks (60 percent of the portfolio) and long-term government bonds (40 percent of the portfolio) such that the forecasted average return is around 7.9 percent, then both trust funds would yield returns sufficient to replace expiring grants and to create a buffer account. However, while the RMI trust fund should continue to grow in perpetuity, the FSM trust fund would eventually deplete the buffer account and fail to replace grant funding by fiscal year 2048.

Amended Compacts Have Strengthened Accountability Over U.S. Assistance

I will now discuss provisions in the amended Compacts designed to provide improved accountability over, and effectiveness of, U.S. assistance. This is an area where we have offered several recommendations in past years, as we have found accountability over past assistance to be lacking.¹⁴ In sum, most of our recommendations regarding future Compact assistance have been addressed with the introduction of strengthened accountability measures in the signed amended Compacts and related agreements. I must emphasize, however, that the extent to which these provisions will ultimately provide increased accountability over, and effectiveness of, future U.S. assistance will depend upon how diligently the provisions are implemented and monitored by all governments.

The following summary describes key accountability measures included in the amended Compacts and related agreements:

- The amended Compacts would require that grants be targeted to priority areas such as health, education, the environment, and public infrastructure. In both countries, 5 percent of the amount dedicated to infrastructure, combined with a matching amount from the island governments, would be placed in an infrastructure maintenance fund.

¹⁴See U.S. General Accounting Office, *Foreign Assistance: U.S. Funds to Two Micronesian Nations Had Little Impact on Economic Development*, [GAO/NSIAD-00-216](#) (Washington, D.C.: Sept. 22, 2000) for a review of the first 12 years of direct Compact assistance.

-
- Compact-related agreements with both countries (the so-called “fiscal procedures agreements”) would establish a joint economic management committee for the FSM and the RMI that would meet at least once annually. The duties of the committees would include (1) reviewing planning documents and evaluating island government progress to foster economic advancement and budgetary self-reliance; (2) consulting with program and service providers and other bilateral and multilateral partners to coordinate or monitor the use of development assistance; (3) reviewing audits; (4) reviewing performance outcomes in relation to the previous year’s grant funding level, terms, and conditions; and (5) reviewing and approving grant allocations (which would be binding) and performance objectives for the upcoming year. Further, the fiscal procedures agreements would give the United States control over the annual review process: The United States would appoint three government members to each committee, including the chairman, while the FSM or the RMI would appoint two government members.
 - Grant conditions normally applicable to U.S. state and local governments would apply to each grant. General terms and conditions for the grants would include conformance to plans, strategies, budgets, project specifications, architectural and engineering specifications, and performance standards. Other special conditions or restrictions could be attached to grants as necessary.
 - The United States could withhold payments if either country fails to comply with grant terms and conditions. In addition, funds could be withheld if the FSM or RMI governments do not cooperate in U.S. investigations regarding whether Compact funds have been used for purposes other than those set forth in the amended Compacts.
 - The fiscal procedures agreements would require numerous reporting requirements for the two countries. For example, each country must prepare strategic planning documents that are updated regularly, annual budgets that propose sector expenditures and performance measures, annual reports to the U.S. President regarding the use of assistance, quarterly and annual financial reports, and quarterly grant performance reports.
 - The amended Compacts’ trust fund management agreements would grant the U.S. government control over trust fund management: The United States would appoint three members, including the chairman, to a committee to administer the trust funds, while the FSM or the RMI would appoint two members. After the initial 20 years, the trust fund committee would remain the same, unless otherwise agreed by the original parties.

The fiscal procedures agreements would require the joint economic management committees to consult with program providers in order to coordinate future U.S. assistance. However, we have seen no evidence demonstrating that an overall assessment of the appropriateness, effectiveness, and oversight of U.S. programs has been conducted, as we recommended.¹⁵

The successful implementation of the many new accountability provisions will require a sustained commitment by the three governments to fulfill their new roles and responsibilities. Appropriate resources from the United States, the FSM, and the RMI represent one form of this commitment. While the amended Compacts do not address staffing issues, officials from Interior's Office of Insular Affairs have informed us that their office intends to post six staff in a new Honolulu office. Further, an Interior official noted that his office has brought one new staff on board in Washington, D.C., and intends to post one person to work in the RMI (one staff is already resident in the FSM). We have not conducted an assessment of Interior's staffing plan and rationale and cannot comment on the adequacy of the plan or whether it represents sufficient resources in the right location.

Amended Compacts Address Other Key Areas

U.S. Military Access to Kwajalein Atoll Could Be Extended Until 2086

The most significant defense-related change in the amended Compacts is the extension of U.S. military access to Kwajalein Atoll in the RMI.¹⁶ While the U.S. government had already secured access to Kwajalein until 2016 through the 1986 MUORA, the newly revised MUORA would grant the United States access until 2066, with an option to extend for an additional 20 years to 2086. According to a Department of Defense (DOD) official,

¹⁵This recommendation was included in U.S. General Accounting Office, *Foreign Assistance: Effectiveness and Accountability Problems Common in U.S. Programs to Assist Two Micronesian Nations*, GAO-02-70 (Washington, D.C.: Jan. 22, 2002).

¹⁶A few expiring provisions would be extended indefinitely in the amended Compacts. The "defense veto" has been extended. In addition, the ability of FSM and RMI citizens to volunteer to serve in the U.S. military would be extended.

recent DOD assessments have envisioned that access to Kwajalein would be needed well beyond 2016. He stated that DOD has not undertaken any further review of the topic, and none is currently planned. This official also stated that, given the high priority accorded to missile defense programs and to enhancing space operations and capabilities by the current administration, and the inability to project the likely improvement in key technologies beyond 2023, the need to extend the MUORA beyond 2016 is persuasive. He also emphasized that the U.S. government has flexibility in that it can end its use of Kwajalein Atoll any time after 2023 by giving advance notice of 7 years and making a termination payment.

We have estimated that the total cost of this extension would be \$3.4 billion (to cover years 2017 through 2086).¹⁷ The majority of this funding (\$2.3 billion) would be provided by the RMI government to Kwajalein Atoll landowners, while the remainder (\$1.1 billion) would be used for development and impact on Kwajalein Atoll. According to a State Department official, there are approximately 80 landowners. Four landowners receive one-third of the annual payment, which is based on acreage owned. This landowner funding (along with all other Kwajalein-related funds) through 2023 would not be provided by DOD but would instead continue as an Interior appropriation. Departmental responsibility for authorization and appropriation for Kwajalein-related funding beyond 2023 has not been determined according to the Department of State. Of note, the Kwajalein Atoll landowners have not yet agreed to sign an amended land-use agreement with the RMI government to extend U.S. access to Kwajalein beyond 2016 at the funding levels established in the amended Compact.

Amended Compacts Would Strengthen Immigration Provisions

While the original Compact's immigration provisions are not expiring, the Department of State targeted them as requiring changes. The amended Compacts would strengthen the immigration provisions of the Compact by adding new restrictions and expressly applying the provisions of the Immigration and Nationality Act of 1952, as amended (P.L. 82-414) to Compact nonimmigrants.¹⁸ There are several new immigration provisions in the amended Compacts that differ from those contained in the original

¹⁷Our figure of \$3.4 billion is adjusted for inflation.

¹⁸As noted in the background section, FSM and RMI citizens who enter the United States are legally classified as "nonimmigrants" – that is, individuals who are in the United States temporarily as visitors, students, or workers.

Compact. For example, Compact nonimmigrants would now be required to carry a valid passport in order to be admitted into the United States. Further, children coming to the United States for the purpose of adoption would not be admissible under the amended Compacts. Instead, these children would have to apply for admission to the United States under the general immigration requirements for adopted children. In addition, the Attorney General would have the authority to issue regulations that specify the time and conditions of a Compact nonimmigrant's admission into the United States (under the original Compact, regulations could be promulgated to establish limitations on Compact nonimmigrants in U.S. territories or possessions).

In addition, the implementing legislation for the amended Compacts would provide \$15 million annually for U.S. locations that experience costs associated with Compact nonimmigrants. This amount would not be adjusted for inflation, would be in effect for fiscal years 2004 through 2023, and would total \$300 million. Allocation of these funds between locations such as Hawaii, Guam, and the CNMI would be based on the number of qualified nonimmigrants in each location.

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Committee, this completes my prepared statement. I would be happy to respond to any questions you or other Members of the Committee may have at this time.

Contacts and Acknowledgments

For future contacts regarding this testimony, please call Susan S. Westin or Emil Friberg, Jr., at (202) 512-4128. Individuals making key contributions to this testimony included Leslie Holen, Kendall Schaefer, Mary Moutsos, and Rona Mendelsohn.

This is a work of the U.S. government and is not subject to copyright protection in the United States. It may be reproduced and distributed in its entirety without further permission from GAO. However, because this work may contain copyrighted images or other material, permission from the copyright holder may be necessary if you wish to reproduce this material separately.

GAO's Mission

The General Accounting Office, the audit, evaluation and investigative arm of Congress, exists to support Congress in meeting its constitutional responsibilities and to help improve the performance and accountability of the federal government for the American people. GAO examines the use of public funds; evaluates federal programs and policies; and provides analyses, recommendations, and other assistance to help Congress make informed oversight, policy, and funding decisions. GAO's commitment to good government is reflected in its core values of accountability, integrity, and reliability.

Obtaining Copies of GAO Reports and Testimony

The fastest and easiest way to obtain copies of GAO documents at no cost is through the Internet. GAO's Web site (www.gao.gov) contains abstracts and full-text files of current reports and testimony and an expanding archive of older products. The Web site features a search engine to help you locate documents using key words and phrases. You can print these documents in their entirety, including charts and other graphics.

Each day, GAO issues a list of newly released reports, testimony, and correspondence. GAO posts this list, known as "Today's Reports," on its Web site daily. The list contains links to the full-text document files. To have GAO e-mail this list to you every afternoon, go to www.gao.gov and select "Subscribe to e-mail alerts" under the "Order GAO Products" heading.

Order by Mail or Phone

The first copy of each printed report is free. Additional copies are \$2 each. A check or money order should be made out to the Superintendent of Documents. GAO also accepts VISA and Mastercard. Orders for 100 or more copies mailed to a single address are discounted 25 percent. Orders should be sent to:

U.S. General Accounting Office
441 G Street NW, Room LM
Washington, D.C. 20548

To order by Phone: Voice: (202) 512-6000
 TDD: (202) 512-2537
 Fax: (202) 512-6061

To Report Fraud, Waste, and Abuse in Federal Programs

Contact:

Web site: www.gao.gov/fraudnet/fraudnet.htm

E-mail: fraudnet@gao.gov

Automated answering system: (800) 424-5454 or (202) 512-7470

Public Affairs

Jeff Nelligan, Managing Director, NelliganJ@gao.gov (202) 512-4800
U.S. General Accounting Office, 441 G Street NW, Room 7149
Washington, D.C. 20548