Phillip MULLER
(Phonetic: MEWler)

Minister of Foreign Affairs (since 1994)

Addressed as: Mr. Minister (U)

Phillip Muller is a shining star among his country's leaders, report US officials. They have identified him as a potential presidential contender who appears to enjoy the respect of all Marshallese, and they note that he also has the confidence of President Amata Kabua. Muller often serves as Acting President when Kabua is out of the country. (C NF)

Muller has dealt with US officials on a regular basis. He has participated in US--Marshall Islands talks on nuclear waste and storage issues in which one of his goals has been to obtain increased US compensation for islanders exposed to radioactive fallout from US nuclear tests at the Bikini and Enewetak Atolls. In 1994 he led a delegation to the US--Marshall Islands compact consultations held in San Francisco. Muller is a polished interlocutor who is friendly and well disposed toward the United States, say US Embassy officials. They add that, although reserved and circumspect, Muller can press matters aggressively when he believes that his or Kabua's interests are at stake. (C NF)

Background and Personal Data (U)

Muller was born on 2 January 1956 in Majuro, Marshall Islands. He was educated at Rockhurst College in Missouri (1975-79). He began his government career as director of youth services (1980-82) and subsequently served as Deputy Secretary of Foreign Affairs (1982-84). In 1984 he was elected to Parliament and named Assistant Minister of Finance and Assistant to the President. According to the local press, as Minister of Education during 1986-94, Muller played a key role in revamping the ailing public school system with the help of aid from the Asian Development Bank. While in that post he also visited the United States on an International Visitor Program grant (1989). (U)

Muller is an avid tennis player and fisherman. He owns a bowling alley and a nightclub in Majuro and reportedly recently secured the rights to Majuro Hotel's gift shop and rental car enterprises. Muller and his wife, the former Yolenda Linda de Brum, have four children. According to Embassy reports, both the Muller and de Brum families are influential in the country. (C NF)