



Tinian airstrips being reactivated

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TINIAN, Marianas — The U.S. military is preparing to unlimber some of the 8 airstrips here that figured as springboards for World War II atomic attacks on Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

Quite obviously, the purpose of reactivating the abandoned Army Air Forces and Navy airstrips has nothing to do with any repetition of those earth-shaking events of 26 years ago.

But one would think vital secrets were involved to judge by the way the Army, Navy, Air Force and Marine advance men are padding around in silence and rubber soled shoes.

ACTUALLY, U.S. military spokesmen announced to Micronesians political status negotiators in Hana, Maui, three months ago that the Defense Department has designs on Tinian.

It figures as backstop for certain activities to be withdrawn from Okinawa following that bastion's reversion to Japanese sovereignty next spring.

During the past three months, military experts ranging from four star brass to engineers interested in quarry sites have made

appearances on this 12-mile-long bit of Western Pacific real estate with growing frequency.

THEY ARE NOT whispering their specific intents even to Trust Territory High Commissioner Edward E. Johnston, or, so he maintains.

Meanwhile, however, Hawaii's Dillingham Corp., a major operator of diversified industries in Guam and the Trust Territory, has been casing both runway complexes on Tinian.

Dillingham Corp. of Micronesia as the only concrete batching plant on nearby Saipan, does quarrying and deals in asphaltic cement paving. One or another arm of Dillingham

would be a logical competitor either as heavy engineering construction contractor or subcontractor when it comes to putting Tinian runways in shape for aircraft of the 1970's.

Dillingham preliminary assessments indicate that the four parallel runways of North Field, from which the B-29 "Enola Gay" lifted off for Hiroshima on Aug. 6, 1945, are in pretty good shape.

THE ASPHALT and coral strips, looking at least a block wide, stretch 8,500 feet each, rather than the 10,000 feet for which they

The only airplane serving Tinian today is a little Piper Navajo of Air Pacific.

The Guam-based air taxi operates five scheduled flights weekly over a Guam - Rota - Tinian - Saipan route, plus extra shuttles between Tinian and Sa-

have been known, a Dillingham man says.

But that would be sufficient length for most military aircraft flying today, even when lifting off with a full load of bombs or equipment.

The Dillingham man pronounces the North Field asphalt as in a remarkably fine state of preservation.

"It looks as if it may have five or more years of life in it and actually seems to have better paving than Isley Field on Saipan which is about to be reconverted into an international jet airport," the Dillingham man said.

Whether it could stand up under today's more punishing loads without major reconstruction of its underpinnings is a question which remains to be determined.

LIKEWISE, the four slightly shorter parallel runways at West Field, a World War II Navy fighter installation, also are standing off the haole koa, ironwood and other jungle growth to an enviable extent.

Antonio Borja, mayor of the 800 Tinian residents, most of whom are nestled into San Jose village near West Field, has indicated that his constituents will welcome the jobs and income expected as a result of the military's reoccupation of the island.

Although the Defense Department says it wants to hang onto certain Saipan lands, it has staked out no stated purposes there. Some Saipan politicians reportedly wish the military would share some of its Tinian activity out to their island in the interests of a more viable economy.

The amenable attitude of Marianas residents to a return of U.S. military activity to their islands is in sharp contrast to that prevailing in the other five districts of the Trust Territory. Elsewhere, the Micronesians generally want no part of military bases in any shape or form.

CONTINENTAL / Air Micronesia is rounding out a \$130,000 education and training program for bringing Micronesians into the airline at operational as well as management levels.

As a reservoir of future management talent 12 Micronesians, two from each Trust Territory district, are taking two year business administration courses at the University of Guam at the carrier's expense.

Ten other Micronesians have completed training with Aloha Airlines and Honolulu Community College as aircraft and engine mechanics. Two of those cadets already have been licensed and are on the job, says Joseph R. Smith, personnel and training manager.

Continental / Air Micronesia, which flies a 7,000-mile route system from Honolulu through the Trust Territory and on to Okinawa; numbers 132 of its 205 employees as local hires, Smith says.