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Week in Review

SUMMARY OF NEWS OF THE TRUST TERRITORY OF THE PACIFIC ISLANDS
Prepared by Micronesian News Service

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SALII AND THE POLITICAL STATUS QUESTION

The chairman and co-chairman of the Congress of Micronesia's Joint Committee on Future Status, Senator Lazarus Salii of Palau and Representative Ekpap Silk of the Marshalls, are scheduled to meet in Honolulu this week with U.S. Ambassador Franklin Haydn Williams, President Nixon's personal representative for the Micronesian status negotiations. They will discuss the next round of talks, which may be held in late May if an agenda can be agreed upon.

According to Salii, the key to the success of the next round of talks is United States reaction to recent moves toward separate status talks in the two districts of Palau and the Marshalls. The Marshalls Nitijela has formed its own political status commission, while in Palau separate talks are under study and a constitutional convention is being considered.

Salii said that the U.S. could possibly negotiate separately with these districts. But it is his belief that Micronesians should wait until they can review the entire draft compact of free association, which, according to the Senator, is a major goal of the next round of talks. Then if it is not acceptable to them, that would be the time to seek separate status talks.

Thus far, the U.S. has made no comment regarding the Marshalls and Palau moves. However, James M. Wilson, Jr., Ambassador Williams' Deputy, gave an indication of what the U.S. reaction might be, in a paper presented to the symposium of the American Society of International Law last month in Washington, D.C. Discussing the commitment of the United States to promote self-determination in Micronesia, Wilson said that it is U.S. policy "to encourage the unity of the Trust Territory and avoid further fragmentation, if at all possible." On the matter of the separate negotiations with the Marianas, Wilson indicated that the U.S. was strongly influenced by the unique history of the Marianas' repeatedly-expressed desire for a separate, close relationship with the U.S. The absence of such a history in the other districts could be a determining factor in how the U.S. responds to such moves by the other districts.

ENIWETOK MEETING

Representatives from the Trust Territory Government and the Departments of Defense and Interior are meeting in Majuro this week for a second discussion of the Environmental Impact Statement for the cleanup of Eniwetok.

This is a continuation of the environmental impact study that began in Honolulu in February; the study is required in order for the cleanup on Eniwetok to proceed.

The meeting and the cleanup impact study, however, are not related to the environmental hearings on the PACE Project, which were also held recently.

FOREIGN FISHING BOATS

Taiwan and Korean fishing boats made news in the Trust Territory last week. In Palau, a Taiwan fishing vessel went aground on Ngesias Reef near the island of Peleliu. All efforts to free the boat have failed so far, due primarily to low tides. Although the 21 crewmen on board are reported safe and have an ample supply of food and water, ships are standing by to take the men off the boat in the event of danger. Palau officials are still investigating the circumstances surrounding the grounding.

In Yap, the fleet commander of five Korean fishing vessels was fined eighty dollars for illegal entry into the waters of the Trust Territory. District officials there charged that only two of the five ships should have entered Yap Harbor for emergency reasons. Moreover, permission should have been sought by radio for the emergency entries. Entry of unauthorized fishing vessels into the territorial waters of the TT is prohibited by law.

SUPPORT FOR ST. PIERRE

Leaders in the Marianas District--from the Congress of Micronesia, the District Legislature, and the Municipal Government levels--have jointly taken a stand in support of Roger St. Pierre, the Trust Territory Chief Public Defender who is being removed from office for improperly accepting money from a woman in the Marshall Islands in 1969. A telegram of support was sent to Stanley Carpenter, Deputy Assistant Secretary of Interior for Territorial Affairs in Washington, D.C., April 23 and other actions of support are planned by the Mariana leaders.

St. Pierre has announced he will fight the removal action of the Administration and is presently in Washington securing legal assistance. In his absence Assistant Public Defender Leo McShane is Acting Chief Public Defender. Administration officials continue to withhold public comment on the case.

PALAUAN WOMAN KILLED

A 28-year old Palauan woman residing in San Antonio Village on Saipan was killed on the evening of April 25 after being hit in the head by a bullet fired from outside her house. The woman, Komiko Ngirmekur, was pronounced dead on arrival at Dr. Torres Hospital.

Marianas District Chief of Police Antonio Benavente stated that Mrs. Ngirmekur was struck while watching some boys play cards outside her house. Witnesses told police that a vehicle pulled up in front of the house, fired several shots, then fled the scene. Murder charges have been filed against two suspects.

PONAPE DISTAD DISAPPOINTED

Ponape District Administrator Leo Falcam has expressed disappointment with the outcome of the recent session of the Ponape District Legislature. According

to the DistAd, more time was spent discussing legislation on the proper length of men's hair and the proper length of women's skirts than on legislation which he feels is badly needed in the district.

The Ponape DistAd was greatly concerned that of a total of nine administration-Sponsored bills introduced during the session, only one was passed--an amendment relating to the mapping and surveying program in Ponape. Two others considered very important by the administration, relating to full-time legislature and the disqualification of government employees from serving in the legislature, were not even reported out of committee, according to Falcam. The bills on hair and skirts lengths generated a great deal of discussion over a period of several days, but did not pass.

Falcam, Ponape's first native-born to serve as the district's DistAd, indicated his disappointment to the members of the legislature in his speech at the closing of the session, April 20. He said his administration remained hopeful that the important legislation still pending would be taken up during the next session in the fall.

On the other hand, Speaker of the Ponape District Legislature, Itor Harris, believes the legislature did a good job. Harris said it was natural that the executive and legislative branches would have differences of opinion. Several lawmakers also pointed out that certain committees needed more time to study some of the administration bills before they could report on them.

NOW, BRIEFLY, HERE ARE SOME OTHER ITEMS OF INTEREST WHICH MADE NEWS DURING THE WEEK:

Elected political leaders, administration officials, and members of the Catholic Church in Yap have begun a political education program. Meetings are being held with the people to discuss the various future status alternatives: free association with the U.S., commonwealth, independence, or U.S. territorial status.

Trust Territory Civic Action Team officials met with Marianas District government representatives April 26 to discuss the future projects of the Civic Action team in the Marianas. With projects about completed on Rota, plans were made to deploy the team in the northern Marianas islands of Pagan, Alamagan, and Agrihan.

John F. Votruba has been appointed Palau district attorney. He is from Berkeley, California.

Public hearings began April 26 on Saipan for six non-TT-citizens-applications for business permits in the Trust Territory. The six applicants are Guam Sales Incorporated--to engage in a boat retail business; Marianas Pacific Distributors--wholesaling liquor and beverages; First National City Bank--banking business; Guam Publications Incorporated--to import for sale current publications of Guam Publications Incorporated and to solicit advertising and printing in the Marianas; Micronesian Broadcasting Corporation--to amend their present business permit; and Swinerton and Walberg--also to amend their present business permit.

Mrs. Olene Anderson, the wife of the late Larry Anderson, is leaving the Trust Territory to reside in California. A long-time TT employee, she last held the position of secretary to the Attorney General. A cash award and a letter of commendation were presented to her for her outstanding work performance.

Saipan's newest medical facility, the Seventh Day Adventist Dental Clinic, was formally dedicated April 23 in brief ceremonies. The clinic was completed in January of this year and opened for business in March.

A group of Palauan farmers are scheduled to visit Guam, Rota, and Saipan in the next few weeks to observe agriculture techniques and equipment-use. The trip will be at the farmers' own expense; it is the first visit to the Marianas District by farmers from other areas of the TT.

And finally, two representatives of the U.S. General Accounting Office are scheduled to visit Saipan this week to make a special survey of government employees allowances and benefits. They will be contacting mostly expatriate government employees for interviews.