

Talks Go On--'No Comment'

(Continued from page 1)

The status talks, which opened Tuesday with formal ceremonies were headed yesterday -- the first working session -- by James Wilson, deputy U.S. representative.

The spokesman said no statement would be issued until the revelation by The Pacific Daily News was discussed with Williams. He said there might be a formal statement this morning.

Despite statements by the spokesman that the revelation was not discussed at yesterday's status sessions, there are indications that the talks did include the future of Tinian -- and that some of the official parties on both sides believe a comment should have been made.

Whatever the course of the talks yesterday, one of the Marianas delegates summed up the general tenor as: "Us negotiating with them is like putting me in the ring with Cassius Clay."

One official of the Trust Territory government said that Williams' staff is apparently unwilling to confront Williams with the story on Tinian.

James White, an attorney and executive director of the Marianas Status Commission said simply he "didn't want to discuss" the story or any report on Tinian.

Other parties in the negotiations on both sides would neither confirm nor deny the Tinian proposal. They also would not confirm nor deny that Tinian has yet been discussed.

However, asked if they would deny the existence of a U.S. report outlining such a step they said they could not do that -- but again would not admit it exists.

Likewise, Congress of Micronesia Sen. Edward Pangelinan, Marianas Status Commission Chairman, would not comment.

A U.S. spokesman said any announcement on the report in the News would have to come from both sides.

"We will not make a unilateral statement," he said, adding that Pangelinan and other Marianas representatives would be involved in any statement.

While some members talked of getting together to discuss a comment last night, Pangelinan said he would only be ready to participate in any joint communique today.

Though the United States is seeking to negotiate the future status of Micronesia -- with at least the Marianas split from other districts -- the United Nations strategic trust past gives the U.S. the power of eminent domain for military purposes.

"It should be remembered," Williams said at opening ceremonies, "that the U.S. has certain legal responsibilities for the maintenance of peace and security in the Pacific and clear legal rights to enable it to carry out these responsibilities."

While official statements of fruitful discussions are mixed with announcements that no one is to say anything about "anything substantive," some Marianas delegates have indicated that the "clear legal rights," have cast a pall on the mood of the talks.

Asked yesterday when some official word might be available on what transpired, a U.S. spokesman said: "When we are ready to say something -- nothing has transpired -- there have been no agreements yet."

The hearings, which will affect the lives of 13,000 Marianas residents, are not open to the public.

Residents 'Not Like Kwajalein'

By Mike Malone
News Staff

TINIAN -- "We don't want Tinian to become another Kwajalein!"

This was the reaction of Congress of Micronesia representative Felipe Atalig yesterday to press reports that the United States has proposed that the entire island of Tinian be turned into a massive military facility.

The still-classified plan reportedly proposed to move Tinian's 700 inhabitants off-island and lease or sell all lands to the U.S. government -- similar to the Army's missile range at Kwajalein atoll in the Marshall Islands.

In an interview, Atalig, Tinian Mayor Antonio Borja, and Council Member Leonardo F. Diaz, all agreed that if the reports are anywhere near accurate, then it was "highly disrespectful to the reputation of Tinian" to even consider such a proposal without first consulting island leaders.

"We should be consulted in advance concerning all possible future plans," Borja declared.

Tinian Distad Representative Frank Chong said islanders were



ATALIG

DIAZ

BORJA

"visibly angry" when learning of the reports and a store in San Jose Village had yesterday's front page headline posted on a window along with a "Yankee Go Home" sign displayed alongside.

An alternative proposal offered in case island residents opposed the first plan -- to relocate San Jose village to the Marpo area in Central Northwest Tinian -- encountered less opposition.

Borja said residents would probably relocate if the United States government paid each homeowner \$35,000 for new housing, along with adequate compensation for business owners. But he strongly objected to suggestions that if the second proposal went into effect, the civilian government should not be subservient to the military with immigration and investment forbidden.

On the refusal of the U.S. and Marianas delegations to either confirm or deny the reports, Congressman Atalig said the people are entitled to know if the revelations were accurate.

"Continued silence could jeopardize the negotiations," he said. "The people could become suspicious if they believe facts are being hidden from them."

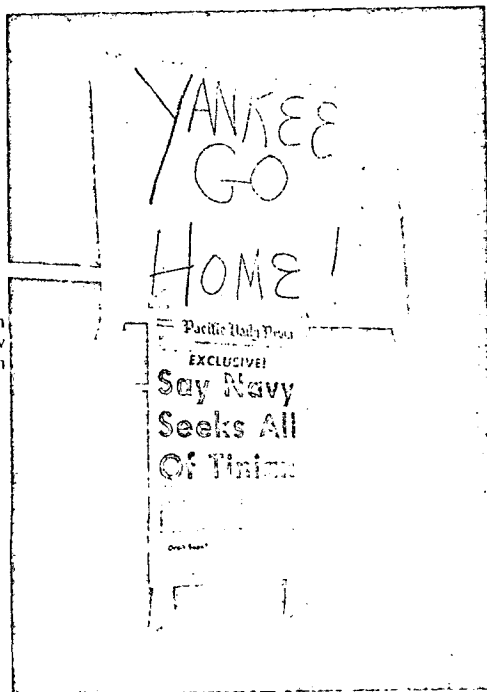
"The people of the Marianas, I am sure, to some degree wish to see the U.S. military return to Tinian, but they do not want to become virtual peons on what was formerly their own land, where they cannot have some voice in their government, economic development, or where the island will become a dumping ground for war materials and personnel not wanted in Guam."

Equally unacceptable would be to place the people under virtual military control, prohibit immigration, Atalig said, and he labeled the arrangement "a camouflaged Communist regime."

"For years now we in the Marianas have heard cries of our neighbors in the Marshalls who have suffered the most from the U.S. military presence in Micronesia. The word of these proposals brings it all right home to us here in the Marianas," said Atalig. "The prospect of a military take over on Tinian is frightening, and I hope the people will not allow the unfortunate history of the Marshalls to repeat itself here."

Mayor Borja said he simply believed the reports were not true. "I welcome the U.S. Armed Forces to Tinian, but only on their present military retention areas," he said.

Military retention lands on Tinian amount to about one-third of the island's 25,752 acre land area.



SIGN in store window on Tinian yesterday.