

IGASETA - May 18, 1973

STATUS TALKS GOT UNDERWAY

SAIPAN, (MNS)---The formal working sessions of the second round of Marianas political status negotiations got under way yesterday (May 16) in the chambers of the Saipan Municipal Council in Chalan Kanoa. In closed session, the American delegation and the Mariana Islands Political Status Commission sat down to begin working on specific proposals related to achieving a close political association for the Marianas with the United States.

The talks officially opened Tuesday, with a public opening ceremony at Saipan's Royal Taga Hotel, at which U.S. Ambassador Franklin Hayden Williams, President Nixon's Personal Representative for Micronesia Status Negotiations, and Senator Edward Pangelinan, Chairman of the Marianas commission, delivered prepared opening statements. One or more additional plenary sessions may be held during the two weeks this round indicated the sessions would be

working sessions close to the public.

A report in the Wednesday edition of Guam's Pacific Daily News caused considerable discussion on Saipan among observers of the status talks. It dealt with an alleged U.S. proposal to take over the entire island of Tinian by the American military, citing a "still-classified report" and an "unimpeachable source." There was no official comment on the newspaper story by mid-afternoon Wednesday from either the U.S. or the Marianas side.

Land requirements for military purposes are expected to be major area of discussion during the current talks. But so far as could be determined no reports of papers had yet been exchanged on the subject. Only a political status study and an economic study, both prepared by consultants for the Marianas commission, have been presented so far. Neither of these has been made public.