

TALKS OPEN AND TITIAN FUROR

There have in the past been lots of bombshells on Tinian. But the island of Tinian itself became a bombshell this Wednesday morning as the working sessions in the second round of Marianas status talks were due to get under way.

OPENING STATEMENTS BELOW

The Pacific Daily News, in an "exclusive" front-page story, reported that secret papers it had learned about indicate that the

U.S. would like the Marianas negotiators to agree to turn over all of Tinian for use by the military.

The "Tinian Papers," as they may well come to be called, elicited no formal acknowledgement or de-

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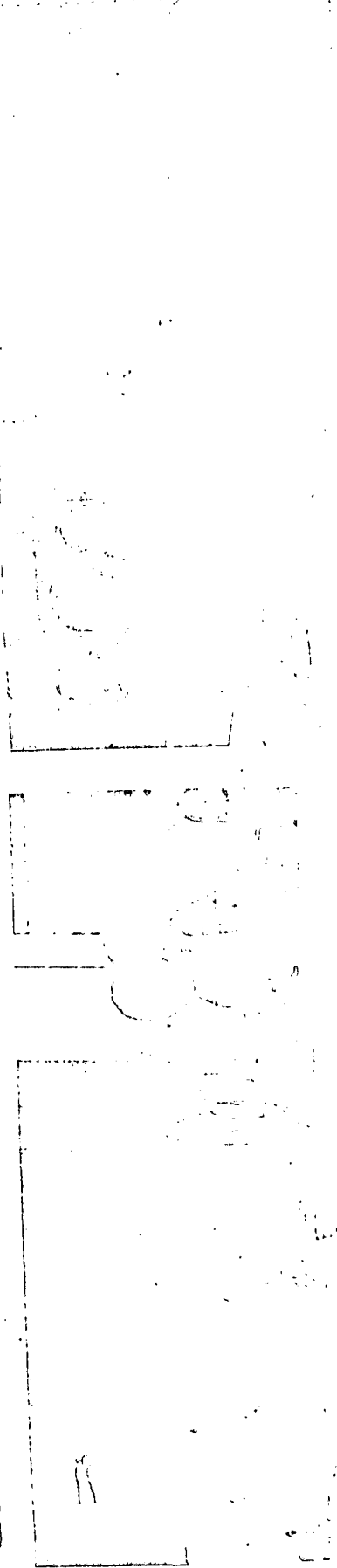
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Senator Pangelinan (center) and Marianas colleagues.

Ambassador Williams (center) and the U.S. delegation

...nial from the U.S. or Marianas delegations until Thursday (see statement). The startling news story caught many of the delegation members by surprise, they said, claiming that they had never received any printed document on Tinian such as the Daily News said was distributed. Others decried the "theft" of secret documents.

Ambassador Franklin Haydn Williams, head of the U.S. delegation, could not be reached because he was ill and, in fact, was unable to attend the start of the working sessions. Many people on Saipan and Tinian seemed to feel that the official silence indicated assent to the news report.

In talking to Tinian residents on Wednesday evening, a sense of concern emerged. "The majority of the people here want the military," said one man. "But if it's going to mean this," he said, tapping the front page of the Daily News, "then I don't know. We don't want to be moved from our village."

The military's desire for land throughout the Marianas, and especially on Tinian and Saipan, was expected to be a major topic during the status negotiations even before Wednesday's bombshell. In his opening remarks

at Tuesday morning's plenary session, Ambassador Williams stressed that, "It should be remembered that the U.S. has certain legal responsibilities for the maintenance of peace and security in the Pacific Ocean area and clear legal rights and powers to enable it to carry out these responsibilities."

A second major point made by the Ambassador was his underscoring of a "commonwealth arrangement" as the "preferred position" of the Marianas people.

At the beginning of his speech, Williams also referred to "a new political status for the northern Marianas Islands," thereby seeming to exclude the southern neighbor island of Guam from the present talks at least. (The full texts of Williams' and Pangelinan's speeches, in English and Chamorro, are reprinted here beginning on page 1.)

When we asked Senator Pangelinan on Wednesday morning, before the sessions started, whether the "commonwealth arrangement" was as firm as Williams seemed to indicate, he replied, "The label isn't that important. It's what is the package that we are looking for."

Pangelinan stressed that he was speaking as a member of the delegation, and not on behalf of the en-

tire Marianas Political Status Commission.

"What we're asking for in the status talks is the largest protection and the greatest benefit.

"The Marianas' emphasis, of course," he added, "is on economics, while that of the U.S. is on military and defense."

Guam will be an "inevitable" topic of discussion, Pangelinan said, adding that the Commission has taken a position on it privately.

As to how he feels about what has become a seemingly irreconcilable break politically from the other districts, Pangelinan explained, "It's quite clear that our aspirations are different.

"But the Marianas will not be totally separate from the rest of Micronesia. There's a lot to be accomplished in such areas as economics, trade, culture, education, that will serve our mutual interests.

"We have interests in common too with the other Pacific areas, and Guam will be our cousin, just politically different."

In addition to position papers on economic and financial support and political and legal problems already presented to the U.S. delegation, the Marianas Status Commission plans to issue papers on land (including its military uses) and transitional government arrangements.

"What we're doing is making recommendations for the people of the Marianas, not decisions," he said. It will be up to the people, in a referendum, to make the final decision on what the political future of the Marianas will be.

The present talks, which the U.S. views as "an ongoing kind of thing," rather than separate rounds, may last about 10 to 14 days.