

Voice Of The People

Dear Editor:

First, I wish to congratulate your newspaper and its staff for the front page story of Wednesday, May 16, 1973, which discusses an alleged proposal by the United States Department of Defense to take over Tinian Island lock, stock, and barrel.

Secondly, I want to express my personal opinion as a citizen of the Marianas that if the proposals mentioned are true, then I doubt that either the "hard sell," or the softer sell approaches will be acceptable to the people of Tinian.

The so-called "hard sell" proposal, would force Tinian landowners to sell or lease their land to the U.S. and then either work on the island as employees of the military facilities, or be relocated "off-island" somewhere else in the Marianas. Despite the fact that there may be a number of people who will welcome the military back to Tinian, I doubt very much if they are willing to see their lands taken over permanently or indefinitely and to be moved off the island, or to work on it as servants of the military.

The second proposal, to relocate the village of San Jose to Marbo and to place the people under military rule, prohibit immigration and foreign investment, I believe, would be equally unacceptable.

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

For years now we in the Marianas have heard the 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. The prospect of a military take-over of Tinian is a frightening one which has implications for the rest of the Marianas. I would hope that the people of this district will not allow the unfortunate history of the Marshalls to repeat itself.

Sincerely yours,
/s/Felipe Q. Atalig
First Representative District
(Tinian, Rota, Southern Saipan)
Congress of Micronesia