

PALAU CHIEFS ARRIVED

SAIPAN--(MNS)---A delegation of high ranking traditional leaders from Palau District arrived on Saipan over the weekend. They are headed by High Chief Reklai Lomisang, and include in their number eleven of the sixteen traditional chiefs of Palau, along with seven special advisors and interpreters.

A spokesman designated by the chiefs to talk with MNS indicated the purpose of the trip is to meet with Trust Territory High Commissioner Edward E. Johnston, to endeavor to enlist his help in a dispute involving the Palau District Legislature. The meeting with the HiCom is scheduled for Tuesday morning (May 22). The group was also scheduled to meet with American Ambassador Franklin Hayden Williams late Monday afternoon.

A power struggle that has been developing in Palau for a long time prompted the unprecedented trip to Saipan by the chiefs. The spokesman said the trip stems directly from certain actions taken during the most recent session of the Palau District Legislature, particularly a negative vote on a proposal by the chiefs to amend the charter of the legislature to create a two-chamber (bicameral) body. At present the chiefs are mem-

bers-without-vote in the legislature, a status which they feel limits their effectiveness.

"Because of their non-voting, non-office-holding status, the chiefs have in the course of 18 years gradually and progressively lost their power and their influence in the shaping and formulation of laws and public policies," the spokesman said. He indicated that the chiefs feel the elected members of the legislature have lost touch with the people. High Commissioner Johnston's action is being sought to amend the legislature charter to create the two chambers, giving the chiefs a vote in legislative actions. The chiefs also object to at least two other specific actions taken by the legislature which, they feel, tend to shut them out of important deliberations and decision-making. These involve membership on the select and executive committees.

Concerning the meeting with Ambassador Williams, the spokesman said the Ambassador requested the meeting and they do not know what will be discussed. He said however, that the position taken by the chiefs regarding land—that prior to any status decision the land problems of Palau must be resolved

by returning all public lands to the people—remains unchanged. This position was referred to by Ambassador Williams and Senator Lazarus Sali in Majuro recently in discussing reasons for delaying the next round of future status negotiations.

The spokesman commented on the position of the chiefs regarding moves toward exploring separate status talks made by the Palau Legislature this

year. He said the chiefs "do not feel that, in the face of the present state of negotiations between the Congress of Micronesia and the United States, it is a wise or prudent time for Palau District to launch this type of move."

In addition to High Chief Reklai, other traditional leaders in the visiting group are: Chief Ngirturong Lawrence of Ngeremlengui; Chief Rengulbai Mesechol of Aime-liik; Chief Maderengebuked Ngirturong of Ngaraard; Chief Ucherbelau G. Joseph of Angaur; Chief Obak Kloulubak of Peleliu; Chief Rekemesik Meliong of Ngatpang; Chief Beouch Ngiratmab of Ngardmau; Chief Uong Kloei of Ngerchelong; Chief Ngirakebou Skang of Ngehesar; and Chief Uong Eltik of Ngiwal. Their advisors are: Joseph Tellei, T. Udui, Renguul Rekemesik, Ngirngetrang, Father Felix Yaoch, John O. Ngiraked