

Pres Mar II

AMBASSADOR WILLIAMS EXPLAIN LAND MATTERS

PUBLIC LAND

First, U.S. policy toward public lands in the Marianas is clear. These lands which have been held in trust, will be returned to the people of the Marianas. The questions still to be resolved before this is done are legal and technical ones, and ones about administration and timing. The U.S. will look at these questions just as soon as possible as part of a larger study now being done on the early return of public land to all the Districts of Micronesia.

LAND ALIENATION

I said last December and wish to emphasize again the firm determination of the United States to work with you to establish an effective means for preventing your land from falling into the hands of people from outside the Northern Marianas. This is not something we take lightly, having seen ourselves what has happened in other places and sympathizing fully with your desire to protect your heritage.

Our studies to date on this indicate that there is a relatively simple means of accomplishing this. It will lie within your powers, although we will be glad to work closely with you to see that it is effectively accomplished, if that is your desire.

The status agreement will enable the Marianas to enact legislation prohibiting the sale of land in the Marianas to anyone other than persons descended from traditional residents of the Northern Marianas or of Northern Marianas ancestry. You could also incorporate

Saipan

At present time we still hold 4,960 acres of military retention land on Saipan, having previously returned 7,600 acres. Present holdings include 640 acres in Tanapag Harbor and 4,320 acres in the southern portion of the island including Isley and Kobler Fields and the surrounding area.

We are now proposing to return 320 acres in the Tanapag Harbor to the Marianas for civilian use and development. At the same time, we would like to retain an equal number of acres in the Harbor for contingency purposes. We do not have an immediate need for this area and the U.S. is willing to lease tracts within the retained harbor area for civilian development purposes that would not interfere with the military in the event a future need arises.

Isley Field is now located on military retention land but is being developed as a civilian airfield. We propose to release it from military retention but want to be able to use it jointly if necessary in the future. Additionally, we propose to hold on to 500 acres of retention land on the south side of Isley Field for the possible future development of maintenance and logistics area should this become necessary. But we are willing to lease this area too until it might be required.

Tinian

In developing plans for military facilities in the Marianas that would use the minimum amount of land we have tried to take account of a number of factors other than strategic considerations.

First, it was felt that the development of a combined military complex in an area separated from civilian centers would minimize interference with civilian

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such provisions into your new constitution.

In brief, the U.S. has a strong desire to assist the people of the Marianas to protect and preserve their interest in and title to their own land.

Now I want to turn to our land requirements in the Marianas. The U.S. has a continuing need for about 23 acres now being used on Saipan by the U.S. Postal Service and the U.S. Coast Guard. Additional small amounts of land may be needed for such civilian purposes as more post offices or branch office for federal agencies. For these we will negotiate with the future government of the Marianas or the property owners concerned.

U.S. Minimum Military Requirements

The U.S. has stated publicly that it needs land in the Marianas in order to meet its defense responsibilities in the Pacific.

The U.S. looks on this as cooperative effort which will require careful consideration of the wishes of those people in the Marianas who will be directly affected. I would like to note with appreciation statements that have been made here in the Marianas acknowledging our need and your spirit of willingness to make such land available as a Marianas contribution to peace and security in the Pacific Ocean area.

Knowing the importance you put on your land we have tried conscientiously to keep our land requirements to the absolute minimum. As we have told the Marianas Political Status Commission, we have needs on three islands: Farallon de Medinilla, Saipan, and Tinian. Farallon de Medinilla

Farallon de Medinilla is now being used for target practice by the U.S. military forces under a "use and occupancy" agreement from the T.T. Government. Its isolated location and difficult terrain make it uninhabitable and inaccessible. We would like to continue to use it indefinitely.

activities and community life. In selecting land sites, careful consideration was given to the social impact of the proposed facilities on the Marianas and on the immediate communities concerned. Consideration was also given to how the location of a base complex could be of the greatest benefit to the local people and at the same time protect and preserve their rights, their customs and their way of life.

Secondly, combining military requirements in one area minimizes construction and support costs associated with military operations. Building facilities in one area improves operational efficiency, reduces transportation and communications costs and avoids duplication of facilities which are wasteful of land -- especially in areas where land is scarce.

Keeping these two basic considerations in mind we would like to concentrate our military activities on one island. That island, as we have stated publicly many times previously, is Tinian.

But the requirements on Tinian are extensive -- so much so that we feel we should acquire the northern two thirds of the island for military purposes. We feel we should also ask to acquire the southern third but would then make this part of the island available to the current residents for normal civilian activities and community life.

The part of Tinian set aside for military operations would be used to construct a joint service military base to include an airfield, a harbor facility, supply and maintenance area and space for occasional training maneuvers. The remainder --- about 7,700 acres outside the base in the south and south-western part of the island, including the farming area of Marpo Valley -- would not live under a military administration. Local municipal government would continue in full effect in that part of Tinian lying outside the base area.

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Williams...

Since we have not had a chance to send experts to Tinian our planning to date is in its preliminary states. It has always been our intention - repeated time and again - to consult fully with the people of Tinian before any final plans are made. Furthermore, detailed studies must be made on Tinian itself before it will be possible to proceed further. It is our intention that these on-the-spot studies be conducted in the very near future in cooperation with local Tinianese and Marianas District officials. I should note, too, that I look forward to visiting Tinian before returning to Washington, hopefully, in the company of members of the Marianas Political Status Commission, to explain directly to the people and leaders of Tinian the U.S. land proposals I am describing here today.

In planning for the base on Tinian we are aware from past experience that when development outside the base area is uncontrolled, undesirable conditions and consequences could result which would not be in the interest of either the local residents or the U.S. military. This is particularly true in the close quarters of a small island environment.

We feel that our proposal is in both our interests and those of the people of Tinian. We plan to work with the local civilian community to plan and promote the rational economic development of the southern one-third of the island. At the same time we would be protecting the essential character of the current Tinian community from unduly strong outside pressures and influences including a major influx of new resi-

various kinds outside the base complex for serving the base community. Additionally, investment in the southern one-third of Tinian will also be possible. New businesses would be permitted if approved by some kind of joint Tinian economic development committee.

The economic benefits of this proposal to the local government should be mentioned. In any resettlement the U.S. Government will, of course, ensure that the new community has the necessary infrastructure, utilities and services to make it viable. The U.S. will also assist in the building of new roads, reclaiming land for agriculture, installing irrigation systems and providing technical assistance on agricultural production and marketing as may be needed.

The presence of a U.S. military base on Tinian will undoubtedly have some social impact on the Marianas and in particular on the residents of Tinian. While every effort would be made to protect and preserve the customs and traditional lifestyles of the people of Tinian they would at the same time have increased opportunities for broader social contact and cultural exchange if they desired. Community schools could be opened to the students of Tinian. Other educational and training opportunities including adult programs may be made available for the whole community. The military presence could also provide nearby emergency medical service which could not be handled by local clinics.

All of the foregoing should not be interpreted in any way as an attempt to close off Tinian Island from its contacts and commerce with the remainder of the Marianas and the world. Normal travel to and from Tinian for business and pleasure will still be free and open

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... AND POSSIBLE UNDESIRABLE COMMERCIAL AND RECREATIONAL activity.

Our proposal to use most of Tinian for military purposes may cause some residents of Tinian a degree of inconvenience, because of the prospects of being physically resettled. This we regret but if we take over the port for military supply purposes we have no alternative but to propose that the village of San Jose be moved to some other suitable location in the southern third of the island. We intend to discuss this question fully with the people concerned. We will seek their views on all aspects of this problem including their choice as to the site for the possible building of a new San Jose. I wish to assure you that the U.S. will defray the costs of the resettlement and the expense of building new homes, and new municipal buildings and the replacement costs of other community activities located in San Jose Village.

The acquisition of the island of Tinian and the subsequent development of an operational joint-service base could have a significant economic impact on all of the northern Marianas in terms of the potentially dramatic increase in revenues available to the new commonwealth government, new employment opportunities on the base for citizens of the Marianas, and prospects for new business and services including local construction, supply and transportation enterprises.

On Tinian itself private land owners would be compensated for their land at a fair market price. Tinian residents would be given first preference for employment on the base provided they have the necessary skills. In this regard special training and educational programs would be available to the local residents. Local residents may also be awarded concessions for small business activities on the base. Likewise, there should be a number of private business opportunities of

Summarizing, I wish to reemphasize that the U.S. is proposing a joint effort in the planning, building, and implementation of the military presence on Tinian. It is an exception opportunity to work together from the outset for structuring the overall effort so as to have the best possible impact on the island's life and at the same time ensure the base's operational effectiveness and its contribution to the maintenance of peace and security in the Pacific.


This concludes my statement of land. The U.S. understands its importance to the people of the Marianas. In meeting its own land requirements the U.S. intends to seek the help and the advice of the Marianas Political Status Commission and the people of these island.

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