

Tinian
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Pipe Dreams



By Joe Murphy

Glub, glub, glub. That is the sound of an island slowly sinking into the sea. Or at least that's the impression I get from reading the current issue of a very prominent, and usually accurate newsletter, circulated through Asia.

Talking about Tinian, the newsletter says that although the U.S. government continues to talk about the Tinian military complex as if it is still in the proposal stage, don't you believe it. One of the best clues, the letter states, so far that actual construction of the base will begin soon: The Air Force has contracted with a Filipino firm to supply it with 500,000 tons of cement over the next years.....nearly all of it destined for Tinian. That friends is a lot of cement for anywhere.

The newsletter says pretty much what we've been saying all along. The lead item states: "Chalk the name 'Tinian' on your mind, for that small island in the Marianas District of the Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands has become one of the most strategic pieces of real estate in the Asia-Pacific region. It is, in fact, destined to become one of the most important military facilities the United States has in the Far East. And along with neighboring Guam (113 miles away) and Saipan (three miles away), it is going to play a key role in the future American military presence in Asia.

"The U.S. already has large Navy and Air Force bases on Guam. It also now holds for military purposes some 4,960 acres of land on Saipan and uses the tiny and uninhabited island of Farallon de Medinilla for target purposes. But future stress is going to be on Tinian."

The article notes that the U.S. plans to cut back on the number of bases it has in other countries, and political and other pressures will be eliminated by shifting the bases to Guam and the Marianas. Perhaps today I'll have a chance to take a run over to Tinian to take a look before it sinks.

I don't mean to jump around, but to get back to that 500,000 tons of cement mention for Tinian in the newsletter above, you've got to realize, by comparison that Guam, in the midst of a building boom of unheard of proportions used an estimated 120,000 tons of cement this past year. Incidentally, the Philippines is about the only country in the Far East that is exporting cement. Taiwan, Japan, Korea can't promise any export, and the P.I. looks like it could be running short, so merchants and wholesalers and contractors are beating a path to Manila these days.
