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Strategic Importance of the Mariana Islands and Defense
Department Planning for Bases in Those Islands

1. Strategic Rationale - The Department of State accepts point in the summary of the Marianas status study (page IV) that the TTPI plus Guam provides the most logical alternative to our current WESTPAC base structure.

However, even here, the strategic rationale for the TTPI as a fallback is credible only if there was a persuasive mission in East and Southeast Asia for our forces deployed in the TTPI. We do not consider that such a case has been effectively made.

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The Department of State has repeatedly endorsed the concept of forward deployment. "Forward deployment" in Saipan and Tinian is, however, at best a pale shadow of the original concept. Many of the advantages inherent in deployment to forward areas: the deterrent effect, the quick reaction effect, the reassurance to allies, the tripwire effect are lost when the point of "forward deployment" is no closer to the probable scene of action than the islands of Micronesia. Bases in Micronesia will provide very little comfort to the South Koreans. For all the political and deterrent advantage to be gained the bases might as well be in Hawaii.

More to the point is the confusion and ambiguity in the paper arising between contingency land requirements in the TTPI vs operational requirements. DOD's thinking is expressed on page V, first paragraph, where we are told that for Tinian "early development is planned for joint service basing facilities, including an airfield, port facility, logistic complex, and a joint service maneuver and training area." DOD's intention to proceed with actual funding for the development of facilities at Tinian is fortified in Annex III to the Marianas status study where a price tag of \$114 million "at a minimum" is cited for development of Phase I - VI of the proposed Tinian complex. The Annex (page 1) indicates that the JCS has already authorized the services to proceed with facility programming actions for the near term Tinian requirements, an authorization which we presume includes Military Construction Program funding in the near future.

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REVIEWED BY BATS DATE 1/11/85

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The foregoing clearly indicates that DOD is viewing Tinian as an additive to our current WESTPAC basing structure and intends to proceed with the development of facilities there without adequate reference to the status of our current base structure in WESTPAC or to the conclusions of the NSSM 171 Study. In our judgment DOD should be closely queried on what may at this time be a redundant base complex at Tinian developed at considerable cost (114 mil). This particularly applies given the relative viability of our current WESTPAC base structure where we have little reason to assume our presence in Japan (to include Okinawa) or the Philippines will be terminated or significantly altered in the foreseeable future. Consequently, a final decision on development of the Tinian base complex should be deferred until it can be considered within its context of NSSM 171.

2. Tinian and Saipan Land Requirements - We can see valid reasons from a purely military point of view for securing use of the entire island and support a negotiating probe to see if this could be effected without damage to our overall political interests and negotiating objectives. We do feel however that in moving to a possible fallback (alternative III or IV pages VIII-IX of the Summary) we should assure ourselves that relocation of the resident population to the southeast corner of Tinian is absolutely mandatory. DOD argues ammunition safety requirements dictate such relocation but we will wish to be absolutely satisfied that this is the case.

Under ideal circumstances the conversion of the entire island of Tinian into a military reservation could offer long term freedom from political pressure, provided a very generous settlement can be offered to the relocated residents of Tinian. The same thing cannot be said for the requirements on Saipan, unless early action is taken to establish some sort of military activity at the Saipan locations which will provide gainful employment or other economic advantage to the population of the island.

There are certain ^{other} inherent weaknesses in the plans for Tanapag harbor and Isley Field. Vehicle rehabilitation and repair and ship repair facilities will operate much less efficiently on Saipan than the comparable facilities do now on Okinawa and at Subic Bay. These two proposals are probably not cost effective. In fact we seriously doubt that indigenous labor is sufficient

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in quantity of potential technical proficiency to perform the high quality skills now carried out at the Navy ship repair facility at Subic. |

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The Defense Department's plans for resolving these problems need to be carefully weighed before any future base construction on Saipan is approved.

Additionally the Under Secretaries Committee should seek from the Department of Defense a breakdown into fiscal year periods of planned expenditures on the Tinian complex. This information would be useful to Ambassador Williams as a demonstration of the economic benefits of a military presence provided the Tinian requirement is found to be consistent with the conclusions of the NSSM 171 Study.

3. Palau - From a tactical standpoint we consider that a negotiation which will satisfy DOD land requirements on Tinian will reduce the case for land requirements in Palau, since many of the Palau requirements can be satisfied using bases in the Marianas.

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