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Patience Urged on Marianas Accord

There is too much haste in the American move to make the Northern Marianas Islands a commonwealth, Robert Wenkam, a Honolulu photographer and author, testified today before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee in Washington.

In a prepared statement, Wenkam said opponents to the plan have had insufficient opportunity to be heard.

Wenkam testified as Pacific representative of Friends of the Earth Inc., an environmental organization.

He said U.S. environmental laws should apply in the proposed commonwealth.

"SHOULD THE Marianas join the U.S. political family, all resources of the sea, including fish, valuable minerals on the ocean floor, possibly including oil, would be in the hands of U.S. corporations," he said.

"There would be no way for the Marianas people to stop tuna fleets from California or Hawaii from opening a tuna business in the Marianas and taking all the fish for themselves," Wenkam said.

Since the United Nations plans hearings there next year, Wenkam asked that Congress wait until after these hearings.

HE SAID opponents of commonwealth status have not received travel funds to testify in Washington.

He said Saipan is an "island slum," that nearby Guam has the fastest-rising crime and unemployment rates in the Pacific and is as close to fiscal bankruptcy as New York City.

U.S. military interest in the Marianas, Wenkam charged, is to create a "forward deployment" line so that air bases would be within nonstop bomb range of Asia.

He suggested a better arrangement "would be a further military build-up in Hawaii as a Pacific advance base."

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