

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

Old Executive Office Building
Room 361
Washington, D.C. 20506

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October 29, 1973

The Honorable James R. Schlesinger
The Secretary of Defense
The Pentagon
Washington, D.C. 20310

Dear Mr. Secretary:

Pursuant to my instructions from the President I set forth during the May-June 1973 negotiations with the Marianas Political Status Commission the U.S. military land requirements on Tinian, Saipan and Farralon de Medinilla. These talks are now scheduled to begin again in December, and one of the principal items on the agenda will be the U.S. proposal for the acquisition of Tinian.

During the last negotiating session, I was questioned by several members of the Marianas Delegation on how firm the Department of Defense plans were for Tinian and to what extent the Congress of the United States was committed to the proposal for a seven phase development of a joint service military complex there. Publicly and privately individual members wanted assurances that if the requested land were to be made available necessary funds would be forthcoming for the purchase or lease of the land and for the subsequent build-up of the base complex as outlined by the Air Force briefers.

I responded that the U.S. proposals were firm and that key leaders in both the U.S. House of Representatives and the Senate on the Interior and Armed Services Committees had been consulted. I stated further that the U.S. requirements were being set forth with their knowledge and initial approval. We have subsequently learned that the legal counsel and economic adviser to the Marianas Delegation have raised again with their clients the question of whether the Congress of the United States will in fact approve the acquisition of new land and the building of new installations on Tinian in the face of the closing of bases in the continental United States, tight budget ceilings and a possible future cut in military construction funds.

More recently certain staff members of the House subcommittee on Interior and Insular Affairs have been questioning the U.S. military land requirements in the Northern Marianas. Members of the committee itself have also shown an interest in this matter. They have asked what the military justification is for a new base complex so close to Guam and why new military facilities are needed when similar ones on Guam are not now being fully utilized. They have also expressed some doubts about funding and whether in the end the Tinian requirements will have a high enough priority within the Department of Defense budget to compete successfully for future defense appropriations.

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