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Week in Review

SUMMARY OF NEWS OF THE TRUST TERRITORY OF THE PACIFIC ISLANDS

Prepared by Micronesian News Service

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SEVENTH ROUND OF TALKS BEGINS

The Seventh Round of the Micronesian Status Negotiations is currently underway in Washington, D.C. In his opening statement, Ambassador Franklin Haydn Williams, President Nixon's personal representative to the talks, noted that "Micronesians now have the opportunity and the responsibility to control, in accordance with their own laws and customs, the most precious commodity of all in Micronesia--land." Senator Lazarus Salii, Chairman of the Congress of Micronesia Joint Committee on Future Status, indicated in his opening statement that "now that the land question is out of the way, the task before us is to complete drafting the Compact of Free Association". The drafting committees went to work immediately and official position papers of both sides covering the remaining portion of the draft compact have been exchanged.

An important factor in the Micronesian response to the U.S. land policy was the reaction to the policy of high-level delegation of leaders from Palau headed by the two High Chiefs, Ibedul Gibbons and Reklai Lomisang, and the Speaker of the Palau District Legislature, Itebang Luii, who traveled to Washington to consult with the Joint Committee. The delegation issued a statement indicating its approval and acceptance of the U.S. proposals contained in the U.S. policy statement, subject to certain conditions. First, the delegation did not feel it necessary for the Congress of Micronesia to become involved in the procedural process of returning title of public lands to the Districts. However, it decided "to accept said role of the Congress of Micronesia provided that it makes provision for the enabling legislation in its forthcoming regular session". Second, the delegation reaffirmed its position that "the public lands in Palau District (should) be returned to its traditional leaders in trust for the people of Palau". Third, the delegation recommended an amendment to clarify the portion of the policy relating to the power of Eminent Domain. And finally, the delegation stated that the "Palau District Legislature shall represent all title holders whose land shall be needed by the United States for defense purposes, and the United States shall have to negotiate with such title holders through the Palau Legislature." The delegation, however, made a formal commitment to negotiate in good faith with the U.S. in order to accommodate the U.S. defense requirement in Palau.

According to reports from Washington, the question of the level of future United States financial support for Micronesia has produced the first major area of difference between negotiators. The Joint Committee has proposed the annual support figure of \$100 million while it is apparent that the amount proposed by the U.S. delegation, although not mentioned publicly, is nowhere near the hundred million dollar figure.

The two major portions of the compact yet to be developed include finance and the amendment and termination of the agreement.

CAB HEARS AIRLINES ARGUMENTS

Pan American World Airways, Continental/Air Micronesia and Northwest Orient Airlines pleaded for the right to provide direct service between Saipan and Japan last week before the U.S. Civil Aeronautics Board. Following the arguments, the Board Chairman Robert D. Timm indicated that it would be several months before the CAB would make its decision known. Twelve members of the Congress of Micronesia argued in favor of awarding the route to Continental/Air Micronesia, the official position of the Congress, while four Congressmen argued that the route should go to Pan American.

The "Battle of the Airlines" has seen both Pan American and Continental/Air Micronesia waging sometimes bitter battles for the support of various Micronesia groups. Charges and counter charges involving bribery, pressuring and lobbying have been alleged by Continental against Pan American and by Pan American against Continental. It is unclear at this point how these charges will affect the outcome of the case.

The third airline in the case, Northwest Orient, has remained out of the fighting over Micronesian support, but its attorney argued for consideration of the airline for the route.

Observers see little chance that Northwest will win the route, however, both the CAB Bureau of Operating Rights and CAB Administrative Law Judge Milton H. Shapiro have recommended that Pan American be given the route. Arguments presented by Pan American attorney Jerry Ryan were designed to support those decisions, while Continental attorney Lee M. Hydeman argued that both the Bureau and the Judge had failed to give sufficient weight to the economic development of all six districts of Micronesia, or to the official position of the Congress of Micronesia. An attorney for Air Pacific urged the Board to place a restriction in the route certification to prevent the entry of an additional carrier into the Saipan-Guam route. TransWorld Airlines' attorney argued in favor of awarding the route to Pan Am because it opposes the entry of a third U.S. carrier into Japan.

HOUSE SUB-COMMITTEE APPROVES \$8.2 SUPPLEMENTAL BUDGET

A supplemental appropriation for the Fiscal Year 1974 Trust Territory budget has been approved by the House of Representatives Appropriation's Sub-Committee on Interior and Related Agencies. High Commissioner Edward E. Johnston, Director of the Office of Territorial Affairs Stanley S. Carpenter, Chairman of the Joint Committee on Program and Budget Planning Raymond Setik of Truk, House Speaker Bethwel Henry of Ponape, Senator Lazarus Salii of Palau, Chairman of the Joint Committee on Future Status and James Wilson U.S. Deputy Representative for Micronesia Status negotiations appeared before the Committee last week to argue for favorable consideration of the supplemental budget.

The approval of the \$8.2 million supplement basically restores most capital improvement project monies cut out of the original appropriation bill for

facilities in the areas of Education, Health, Transportation, Power and Community Development. Also included in the approved supplemental request are amounts for an accelerated program of education for self-government, an accelerated program for the survey of public land in Micronesia, and an amount to be used as the U.S. contribution toward the cost of a Micronesian Constitutional Convention. In addition, the Committee agreed to fund one of the specific items requested over and above the official supplemental request, namely an appropriation of \$160,000 to purchase new school buses for Saipan.

The entire supplemental request must still be considered by the full U.S. House of Representatives, as well as by the Senate. An appropriations Sub-Committee of the Senate will hold hearings on the request this week.

BRIEFLY, HERE ARE SOME OTHER ITEMS THAT MADE NEWS IN THE TRUST TERRITORY LAST WEEK:

The death of a former Deputy High Commissioner of the Caroline, Marshall and Mariana Islands during naval administration times was reported last week in the Washington Star-News. Retired Navy Vice-Admiral John Esten Whelchel died at the Portsmouth Virginia Naval Hospital at the age of 75.

Kemmots Rekekal of Palau received a certificate of training in heavy equipment operations after completing a month-long training program on Saipan. The training program was jointly sponsored by the Headquarters Department of Public Works, Central Repair Shop and the Transportation Division.

The Division of Community Development reported last week that the four headquarters grants-in-aid were awarded to various communities during October. The grants were awarded to Lelu Village in Kusaie to construct the first increment of a water system, to Ailinglaplap Co-Op in the Marshalls to construct a larger warehouse, to the Municipality of Tinian in the Marianas to begin construction on a Head Start Center building, and to the Ebon Island Community in the Marshalls for an agricultural rehabilitation program.

A severe shortage of fuel caused a mini-crisis at the district center at Moen, Truk. Measures to conserve power, including shutting down two of the five power generators on Moen, were put into effect until the necessary oil is received.

Chief of Dental Health Division Dr. Helkena reported that two dental laboratory technicians from the Trust Territory are now taking courses at the U.S. Naval Dental Clinic in Guam sponsored by the World Health Organization. They are Soros Phillipso from the Marshalls and Peter Villagomez from the Marianas.

Philippine authorities have released Luis Kapileo, a Saipanese crewman aboard the M/V Gunners Knot to the custody of the TT Government. Kapileo was charged with "homicide through reckless imprudence" in the accidental shooting death of a fellow crewman from Ponape District.