

## Editorial

# A Compromise Likely....

With Guam's lengthy experience to draw from, we hope that negotiators from both sides can work out a fair compromise over the future of Tinian Island in the Northern Marianas.

Tinian's fate, of course, is just one of the stickier questions involved in the Northern Marianas Political Status Talks, now taking place in Saipan.

We offer the use of Guam for comparison purposes, because the military government literally controlled every aspect of Guam's life for more than 50 years, from the acquisition of Guam from the Spanish to the day the Organic Act was signed in 1950. Worse, military control didn't even end then. The military kept their odious "security clearance" ruling into effect until 1962—and were unhappy about releasing that control even then. With the security clearance gimmick, it meant that the military alone decided who could visit Guam, and when, and how long they could stay.

It is pretty obvious to even the most casual observer that Guam's economic growth was completely stymied both under the military rule and under the security clearance restriction.

We understand the reasoning behind Ambassador Hayden Williams' express desire to take over the entire island, and then leasing back certain portions of it to the people of Tinian. This way, the U.S. negotiators believe, they can effectively control all of the evils that could accompany a large influx of military population anywhere. Without control the military fears such things as gambling and prostitution could be brought to the island, following the troops.

Naturally, there is local opposition to any complete "take-over" of the island, although opposition to the military returning to Tinian is not very vocal, and there lies the key to a possible compromise.

One writer, in an article printed in the Chicago Sun-Times recently said: "As part of a 'fallback' defense perimeter in the Pacific, Tinian with Guam is slated to replace Okinawa as the 'keystone of the Pacific' in the event the United States is forced to abandon bases in Japan, the Philippines, or on the Asian mainland." The writer claims that the Air Force now plans to turn the 40-square mile Manhattan-shaped island into a major forward supply depot and weapons storage base.

He said: "Despite local opposition, the Air Force remains committed to its plans. For the United States, this new island-based strategy will guarantee the United States a string of bases under complete American political control. There will be no need for leases, no evictions and no Okinawa-type 'reversions.'" He said that sometime in the next two years the Air Force is expected to ask Congress for the first installment on a \$150 million "replacement" air base.

This article also suggested: "To forestall the possibility of major congressional opposition to the base, the Air Force plans to set up

what it calls a 'bare base' - a portable base made up of modular components now stored at bases in New Mexico and California. This bare base approach will allow the Tinian airfield to become operational years before it could otherwise and with a reduced need for congressional appropriations."

Hearings were held by the Northern Marianas Political Status Commission on Tinian last week as the group tried to ascertain the true feelings of the people about the ongoing status talks. Similar meetings are planned for Rota and Saipan in coming weeks.

"The people of Tinian are quite concerned about their future," Senator Edward Pangelinan, chairman of the commission, said on his return. "The negotiations in this area are quite sensitive and we wanted to assure the people that we will keep them fully informed." The meeting on Tinian was well attended, with nearly every family on the island represented. Discussion lasted until well after midnight, with the questions coming thick and fast.

When he was asked later by the press to characterize the mood of the people on Tinian, Sen. Pangelinan said that there were many who are concerned about the extent of military use of the island, as well as what he described as a "handful" who are "cautious" about allowing the military to return to Tinian.

The Senator said the commission told the people that they are seeking to reach a compromise with the United States on military use of the island that will be acceptable to everyone, and he expressed the feeling that such a compromise is certainly possible.

While we seriously doubt if any compromise could be found that would be acceptable to everyone, some basic facts do remain. The people of Tinian, generally, want the military to return, and the military wants and needs Tinian for a base. Given that fortunate set of circumstances we don't see any reason why reasonable men can't come up with a reasonable solution.

Frankly, we oppose a complete U.S. take-over of the entire island. We think that the military can prevent unwanted commercialism surrounding their base by more subtle means—like not allowing their people off-base passes, for instance. They are certainly well aware that they will be a major force in any commercial activity by the people of Tinian in the future. They will be in a position, with a nod of their head, to close any unwanted establishment—without owning the entire island.

Further, we believe the leadership of the Northern Marianas and the people of Tinian will also reject any type of Guam-style security clearance for the island. Sure, there is going to have to be some give and take on the Tinian question, but we don't believe that the problem is insurmountable. JCM.

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