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Week in Review

SUMMARY OF NEWS OF THE TRUST TERRITORY OF THE PACIFIC ISLANDS
Prepared by Micronesian News Service

Saipan, Mariana Islands

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Saipan Hardest Hit by Energy Crisis

A survey of all six districts in the Trust Territory last week showed that the Headquarters island of Saipan, in the Marianas, appears to be having the most problems with the fuel shortage. This is perhaps understandable, since Saipan is the most-developed island in the TT, with the highest electrical power requirements and the most automobiles by far.

Over the Christmas weekend, Saipan experienced two scheduled partial power blackouts of a little over three hours duration each, as Public Works officials, alarmed by the rate at which scarce diesel fuel was being used by the huge power generators, attempted to take some of the pressure off. They reported just after Christmas, however, that the power plant is consuming fuel at a rate about twenty per-cent above the fuel allocation level.

The gasoline situation also became critical during the week, as some of the island's eight private gasoline dealers began to exhaust their December allocations of fuel from Mobil Micronesia. As rumors and concern spread, long lines of cars began to form at those stations with fuel remaining, and dozens of motorists had the frustrating experience of waiting in line for one or two hours, only to have the station run out of gas just before getting to them. Officials could hold out little hope of easing the situation before the end of the month, although at week's end district and territorial government authorities were meeting to see what could be done. Hundreds of man-hours of work were being lost in both government and private industry because employees either could not obtain enough gas to drive to their jobs, or because they were lining up at the gasoline stations hoping to get some fuel. At a meeting of the Territorial Fuel Conservation Committee and Marianas District officials, it was agreed that the near-panic situation on Saipan was being fed by rumors and the erratic hours of operation of some of the stations. One official commented: "If people would conduct their buying of gasoline as they normally do, there wouldn't be any need for queuing up at the stations."

It was also agreed, however, that more voluntary cooperation is needed if mandatory controls, both of gasoline and on electricity, are to be avoided. "There is going to have to be a greater degree of cooperation--across the board cooperation--from all segments of the public on Saipan," said High Commissioner Edward E. Johnston.

The HiCom made his comment following his weekly conference telephone call with the DistAds or other district officials in Palau, Yap, Truk, Ponape and the Marshalls. He said he found that the greatest problem with the fuel shortage is on Saipan.

Ponape DistAd Leo A. Falcam indicated that his district has managed to reduce its consumption of both gasoline and diesel fuels by a substantial amount during December. Majuro, in the Marshall Islands, reported that it did not use all of its allocation of private fuel for the month. Truk reported strict conservation measures in effect, but no panic or particular problems. In Yap all gasoline stations have remained open, conservation is being practiced, but there is no panic. Palau DistAd Thomas Remengesua reported the district is "taking everything in stride" with extreme conservation measures in effect but no panic.

Mobil Micronesia official Ron Chavako was on Saipan at mid-week to discuss the fuel situation with government authorities in charge of fuel allocation. He said Mobil is doing all that it can to insure a continued supply of fuel, and he urged people not to panic or allow rumors to influence their buying habits. He and the TT Fuel Conservation Committee are working closely to examine special fuel needs, and, where warranted, authorize fuel deliveries over and above the allotted 88 per cent.

Three such decisions were announced last week. The Military Civic Action Team working on the re-surfacing of the Rota Airfield in the Marianas was assured of sufficient fuel to complete its work. On Saipan, the company renovating the old Isley Airfield--a major transportation project this year--was told it would have all of its fuel needs met on a month-to-month basis. And in Ponape, sufficient fuel was authorized for the M/S Saigon, a ship chartered by Hanil Construction Company, to get to the Marshall Islands, where it is to deliver construction supplies for Hanil projects, including the new high school at Jaluit.

So the fuel shortage is definitely being felt in Micronesia. Still most people seemed to feel that by comparison with other parts of the world, such as Japan, and England, the Trust Territory is in pretty good shape.

CONGRESSMEN TO VISIT

Members of the United States House of Representatives Interior Sub-Committee on Territorial and Insular Affairs will visit portions of the Trust Territory next month. Sub-Committee Chairman Phillip Burton of California will lead a delegation that will travel to American Samoa, Guam and the Mariana Islands District of the TT. Included will be Sub-Committee members Thomas S. Foley of Washington, William M. Ketchum of California, Antonio B. Won Pat of Guam and Ron De Lugo of the Virgin Islands. They are scheduled to arrive on Saipan Sunday, January 6 and depart the following Tuesday, with brief stops at Tinian and Rota on their way back to Guam. They will be unable to visit any of the other districts.

Two other members of the Sub-Committee, however, have announced plans to visit the Eastern Districts during January. Congresswoman Patsy T. Mink of Hawaii and Congressman Lloyd Meeds of Washington will fly from Honolulu to Truk on January 14, and will visit Majuro and Ponape on succeeding days before returning to Hawaii on January 17. They have expressed an interest in meeting with district officials particularly on the problems of education and health care. One special purpose of the trip will be to visit the new Truk District Hospital.

TAX REMINDER ISSUED

A reminder was issued last week to all employers in the Trust Territory that the end of the tax year is approaching, and they should begin to get their income and gross receipts tax records ready for submission to the Revenue Division of the TT Finance Department before January 31, 1974.

Jesus P. Mafnas, Chief of the Division, noted that all of the required forms have been forwarded to the district Revenue Officers for distribution. He said the TT income tax law provides for a penalty for those who failed to file the proper returns. The law also provided for an extension of the deadline, but Mafnas said such an extension may only be granted for justifiable reasons, and must be applied for through his office on Saipan.

Generally, most taxpayers will receive a refund this year, and Mafnas noted that government employees do not need to file for this refund as it will be distributed automatically. Refunds to employees of private businesses depend on the filing of the appropriate tax reports and records by each employer, and employees with questions about their refunds or taxes should first check with their employer.

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

The District Administrator's Representative on Rota in the Marianas, Prudencio T. Manglona, was awarded a U.S. State Department International Visitor Grant. The Grant will enable Manglona to travel through the United States for a thirty-day period at the expense of the State Department, observing U.S. government agencies and institutions in operation.

Continental Air Micronesia announced that the float entered by Continental Airlines in the prestigious tournament of roses parade on New Years Day in Pasadena, California will have Micronesia as its theme. The float will depict beaches, palm trees, typical Micronesian native housing and waterfalls, and will be entirely decorated with orchids and other tropical flowers. Two Air Micronesia employees from the Trust Territory, Lucy L. Kono of Palau and Remy C. Cabrera of Saipan, have been selected to ride on the float. The parade will be seen by millions of television viewers in the U.S.

An exchange of letters between Marianas Congressman Felipe Q. Atalig and U.S. Deputy Representative for Micronesian Status Negotiations James M. Wilson became public last week. The two men had a disagreement following a reception held at Saipan's Royal Taga Hotel during the final week of the Marianas status negotiations, which ended December 19. It appeared, however, that the problem was mostly one of communication, with the two men not in agreement over just what the other meant.

It was actually a little surprising that there was as much news last week in Micronesia as there was, considering that it was Christmas week. Government employees enjoyed a four-day weekend, with the day before Christmas declared an official holiday, and they looked forward to another long weekend over New Year's. Holiday messages of greeting went out over the communications wires to the people of Micronesia from, among others, President Richard M. Nixon, High Commissioner Edward E. Johnston, Secretary of Interior

Rogers C.B. Morton, and from all six District Administrators.

On Guam, the Navy announced that the Annual Santa's Sailors program of flying gifts to the children of the Trust Territory was a success, with numerous pallets of gifts, candy, books, medicine, clothing and tools delivered on schedule to the islands of Yap, Truk, Ponape, Palau and Majuro, as well as to Rota and Tinian in the Marianas.

This year was the first one in the past 19 years that there was no military-sponsored Christmas Air Drop of gifts by parachute to the people of the remote Outer Islands in Micronesia. The fuel shortage forced the military to discontinue that program....but hopefully, it will be resumed next year.

From all of us at the Micronesian News Service and the Micronesian Broadcasting Service, a very Happy New Year to you.