

More and more details are being learned about the military plans for Tinian—but there are a lot more details still to be considered.

The U.S. officially confirmed that it has proposed to the Marianas Status Commission that it acquire all of Tinian—but would leave one-third of the island for civilian use. That not-so-startling revelation was made strangely enough, by U.S. Ambassador Franklin Haydn Williams, President Nixon's personal representative, to the people of the Marianas during a radio broadcast. The statement was also translated into Chamorro, and included a detailed description of the U.S. minimum land needs on Tinian and Saipan.

Williams said that the military land needs were so extensive that they want to acquire the northern two-thirds of the island for military purposes. He went on to add: "We feel we should also ask to acquire the southern third but would then make this part of the island available to the current residents for normal civilian activities and community life."

Another source said that the U.S. has also requested the option to incorporate the southern third of Tinian into the military base "under emergency conditions".

Reports were that the U.S. foresees that a seven-stage plan, when completed, would station 2,600 military and civilian personnel on Tinian, not including dependents. The move would increase the land area actually used by the military from its present 8,882 acres to 18,500 acres. The southern third of Tinian—about 7,700 acres, including the farming area of Marpo Valley—would be used by the current residents much as it is now, Williams said in his unexpected statement. He did say that a joint effort in planning, building, and implementing the military presence there would be undertaken only after consultation with the people.

Ambassador Williams said that the harbor area "has to be taken over", and so San Jose Village will have to be moved, but that the U.S. will defray all costs of resettlement, including new homes, government buildings, and that landowners would be fairly compensated.

Another important point noted by Williams was that residents of Tinian would not live under a military administration—except, presumably, in times of emergency. The municipal government would continue to rule outside the base area, and new businesses would be permitted—if approved by a Joint Economic Development Committee—and travel would be "free and open" for island residents. The Ambassador described military operations as including a joint service military base, airfield, harbor facility, a supply and maintenance area, and space for occasional training maneuvers.

Certainly, there must be some excitement among the residents of Tinian today—and possibly more than a little opposition to the thought of picking up and leaving their homes, their harbor, and their village of San Jose.

Still, as Williams noted, the military acquisition of Tinian would have a significant economic impact throughout the area in terms of potential revenues available to the new commonwealth

government, and would offer Tinian residents employment opportunities, new schools, infrastructure, utilities and services.

One of the important points Williams noted was that it has always been the intention of the U.S. to consult with the people of Tinian before any final plans are made, and that a visit there with members of the Marianas delegation is planned for the near future, although no exact date was set. What Williams didn't say was that "consultation" is going to be pretty much of a one way street. The military—and the U.S.—has its mind made up. The U.S. has the right, under the United Nations charter, to fortify the islands—although there is no question that there will be plenty of opposition to that right, probably by the Soviet Union, and the Chinese perhaps at the United Nations Trusteeship Council meeting in New York next week.

The U.S. also has the right of eminent domain on Tinian, and thus, the land can be taken from the islanders regardless of how they feel about it.

We don't want to give the islanders any clues, but we suggest that if there is strong, unified opposition to the military "take-over" plan on Tinian, it wouldn't hurt for the islanders to send a delegation to the U.N. Trusteeship Council's annual hearings next week. Certainly, the Tinian issue will be an important one to be discussed.

Still, in some respects the people of Tinian could be a lot better off in the near future than they are now. Williams says: "We feel that our proposal is in both our interests and those of the people of Tinian. We plan to work with the local civilian community to plan and promote the rational economic development of the southern one-third of the island."

There was one small hitch in Williams' statement: He says that the essential character of the current Tinian community should be protected from "unduly strong outside pressures and influences," including a major influx of new residents and undesirable commercial and recreational activities. What Williams is really saying here is that the Tinian people can have their own civilian community—but the military is going to restrict such things as immigration, commercial activities, and recreational activities in that community. Despite the vagueness of Williams' statement on the subject, we think that it's spelled out pretty well. For example, we can't imagine the military allowing the Tinianese to establish a gambling casino in their sector of the island.

We agree with one member of the Marianas Status Commission, who said: "There are dangers in rushing towards any binding agreements now. There is an element of 'take it or leave it' in these talks, and frankly, I'm worried about it." Another delegate spoke in terms of "unpreparedness". Another noted that the islands have seemingly been kept "dependent", waiting on U.S. dollars from the Defense Department to "develop" the islands. Foreign money has been kept out, ostensibly to allow the local economy to develop, but more realistically, to allow the military time to move back in.

In some ways, as we said, the Tinian people could have it made under military paternalism. They can leave their tin-roofed shacks, and their slum-like village, for a modern community, with

new, concrete houses, with running water, electricity, on sewer lines. They can have new schools, with good teachers. They can have new stores, new theaters--with perhaps easy access to the tennis courts, swimming pools, and bowling and golf courses that usually accompany such military installations. The Tinian people will have an opportunity for a variety of jobs and economic opportunity, where few exist today. They can accept jobs in all categories for the new installation, from housecleaners, to taxi drivers--but also in highly skilled technical fields as well. We would imagine that the military will install training facilities, with an emphasis on training the local people for good jobs on the base. Certainly, a great deal of economic opportunity will exist outside the base confines, although the military has a habit of discouraging some of this by incorporating most of the necessities on board.

Despite Ambassador Williams lengthy statement there are still some important questions that come to mind. These include the following:

1. When? So far there has been no time-table announced. Is planning now underway? Will

construction start tomorrow? Next week? Next year?

2. How much? And where are the funds coming from? Once, some time ago, we heard the figure \$50,000,000 mentioned in connection with the Tinian establishment. But nowhere in the Ambassador's statement was there any mention of the cost of the relocation, the land acquisition, nor the proposed cost of the base. More than that, we've watched with interest military funding over the years, and thus far, we've never see a dime budgeted for any development of Tinian. It's possible, of course, that this is one of those "secret" projects, like Canton Island, or Diego de Garcia in the Indian ocean, and thus, the funding is already available but no public mention has been made of the monies.

3. How much will the Tinian base contribute to the proposed Commonwealth of the Marianas coffers?

4. If the base is to be a joint venture by all of the military services--a unique concept in itself--which branch will actually administer the base?

5. How will the military establishment on Guam be affected by the Tinian base? Will the military build housing for dependents on Tinian, for instance, or allow them to live on Guam for the time being? Will Guam's Apra Harbor be used as a transshipment point for Tinian, or will Tinian's harbor be upgraded to service ocean going vessels? Will the military install a hospital on Tinian, or continue to use Guam's Naval Hospital here?

6. What will the reaction of the United Nations Trusteeship Council be concerning the Tinian take-over proposal?

7. If the people of Tinian, as Williams says, are allowed to have "free and open" travel, will they be allowed their own harbor, their own airstrip, or will they have to utilize the military facilities for these things?

8. Is this military take-over of the island permanent? Or for twenty years, or 99 years?

9. What is going to happen to the J&G cattle ranch, and farmland that took so many years, and so much money to develop?

There is no question but these questions will be answered in the near future. And there is no question but that these are exciting times, not only for the people of Tinian, but for those in all the Marianas--including Guam. For nearly 30 years since the flight of the Enola Gay Tinian has sat, neglected, almost forgotten by the world around it. But time, and the 20th century is at last moving ahead for Tinian. The shock is going to be tremendous for all concerned. JCM.