

US to build huge military complex on Tinian Island

American desire to have more secure bases to continue its security commitments to Asia.

As American territory, and lightly populated, Tinian has none of the political disadvantages of say Japan and Okinawa, where the US still maintains major facilities.

SAIPAN — THE US government announced yesterday it proposes to acquire two-thirds of the Pacific Island of Tinian—launch site for Second World War atomic bombing raids on Japan — for construction of a major new military base.

US ambassador Haydn Williams, in a 20-minute radio address to the people of the US-administered Mariana Islands, said the base would include an airfield, harbour, supply and maintenance facilities and training grounds.

He gave no further details of the base, but the Pacific Daily News on the island of Guam said it would house 2,600 military and civilian personnel and would cover about 18,500 acre (8,950 hectare).

Tinian, with a population of nearly of 800, is part of the Marianas group in the Western Pacific. The Marianas from part of the Pacific Trust Territory which the US administers under a United Nations mandate.

Negotiations have been in

progress for several years on ending this mandate, but the Marianas alone want to continue as an America possession. Agreement has already been reached in principle on a form of commonwealth status similar to Puerto Rico.

Tinian had a brief moment of fame when it was used to launch the US atomic bomb raids on the Japanese cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki in August, 1945. The runway is now overgrown. Ambassador Williams, who heads the US negotiating team to the status talks, said the rights of local residents would be protected when the military moved in, but the island's only village would be moved from its present location near the harbour to a nearby area.

The US proposal actually involves the takeover of the entire island, but about one-third will remain under civilian control.

Negotiations on the Marianas future are expected to be completed this week.

Guam, the largest island in the Marianas chain, is outside the present negotiations. It already houses several important American military bases.

With the addition of Tinian, 176 kilometres to the north, the Marianas are expected to become the major line of defence for the US in the Western Pacific.

The acquisition of Tinian is seen as motivated by an

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Island base plan denied

SAIPAN, Mariana Islands (UPI) AMBASSADOR Franklin Haydn Williams denied that the United States is asking for exclusive use of the entire island of Tinian.

Guam's only daily newspaper reported they had reliable information the United States plans to take over the island for a massive US military base. The paper reported from "unimpeachable sources" that the US military would also assume governmental control of the island and its 500 residents.