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FROM: CINCPACREP GUAM/TTPI GUAM MARIANAS ISLANDS

TO: SECSTATE WASHINGTON DC

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FROM STATUS LNO 187 (JUNE 21, 1974)

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SUBJECT: A LOOK AT PAGAN ISLAND AND ITS PEOPLE

1. (U) COMMANDER WESTLAKE AND STATUS LNO TRENT VISITED PAGAN ISLAND IN MARIANAS DISTRICT JUNE 20. THE 1½ HOUR FLIGHT OF SOME 200 MILES FROM SAIPAN WAS MADE IN 6-SEATER CESSNA SKYMASTER ~~PLANE~~^{AIRCRAFT} OPERATED BY ISLAND AVIATION CO. OF GUAM WHICH IS NOW ~~OPERATING~~^{PROVIDING} THIS TYPE OF WEEKLY SERVICE BETWEEN GUAM AND PAGAN. PREPARATION FOR TRIP INCLUDED DISCUSSIONS WITH MPSC MEMBER FOR NORTHERN ISLANDS SEN. OLYMPIO BORJA (WHOSE ARTICULATE CHAMPIONING OF THEIR CAUSE IS FAMILIAR TO USDEL IN MARIANAS STATUS NEGOTIATIONS), ACTING HICOM COLEMAN AND MARIANAS DEPUTY DISTAD AKIMOTO WHO NOTIFIED PAGAN DISTADREP DANNY CASTRO BY RADIO.

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2. (U) FLIGHT WAS MADE UNDER EXCELLENT WEATHER CONDITIONS PERMITTING CLOSE VIEW OF ANATAHAN, SARIGAN, GUGUAN AND ALAMAGAN ISLANDS AND MORE DISTANT VIEW OF FARALLON DE MEDINILLA EN ROUTE. HIGH VOLCANIC PEAKS AND BUSH COVERED CRATERS, DARK STREAKS OF OLD LAVA FLOWS, OCCASIONAL BLACK SAND STRIPS, WITH NO NATURAL HARBOR FORMATION, CHARACTERIZED THE 5,000 FT. AERIAL VIEW OF THESE RUGGED HIGH ISLANDS.
3. (U) PAGAN APPEARED LARGEST AND HANDSOMEST OF THE LOT WITH TWO VOLCANIC PEAKS RISING ABOUT 3,000 FEET OUT OF THE SEA. EXCEPT FOR EVEN HIGHER AGRIHAN, VISIBLE A FEW MILES AWAY, AND SOME SCATTERED UNINHABITED BITS, PAGAN IS THE NORTHERNMOST OF THE MARIANAS CHAIN. DESCENT FOR LANDING OFFERED GOOD VIEW OF TWO LAKES, ONE OF WARM SULPHUROUS CONTENT, AND BLACK SAND BEACH AREA IDENTIFIED AS PROJECTED LOCATION OF KEN JONES' HOTEL AND RESORT. DEVELOPMENT OF ANY SUCH COMPLEX WILL TAKE CONSIDERABLE EFFORT.
4. (U) LANDING STRIP OF CRUSHED CORAL, PARTLY GRASS GROWN WAS BUILT BY THE JAPANESE WHO BASED SOME BOMBERS THERE. ITS PRESENT USE IS MADE POSSIBLE BY WORK OF A USAF CONSTRUCTION TEAM WHICH HAS LEFT BEHIND NOT ONLY A USABLE AIRSTRIP BUT A STURDY WAREHOUSE, CONSPICUOUS IN CONTRAST TO THE GENERALLY DERELICT STRUCTURES ON THE ISLAND. WE WERE TOLD THAT AT ONE TIME 2-3000 JAPANESE FORCES WERE STATIONED ON THE ISLAND. VESTIGES OF THE JAPANESE OCCUPATION WERE TRACES OF CONCRETE WATER CATCHMENTS AND A SHELL-POCKED MONUMENT OF SOME SORT.
5. (U) FOUR HOUR VISIT AND PARTIAL TOUR OF PAGAN COULD ONLY GIVE SUBSTANCE TO SENATOR BORJA'S PLEAS (WHICH HE SEEMED TO HAVE MADE IN ONLY RATHER PRO-FORMA FASHION) FOR AID FOR THE NORTHERN ISLANDS. PAGAN'S POPULATION OF 62 PERSONS, MOST OF WHOM APPEAR TO BE OF CAROLINIAN DESCENT, CAN ONLY BE DESCRIBED AS LIVING IN CONDITION OF SQUALOR DESPITE THEIR TRAVEL-POSTER SURROUNDINGS OF GREEN MOUNTAINS AND SAPPHIRE SEA. HOUSES ARE SHACKS OF RUSTING CORRUGATED METAL

OR DILAPIDATED QUONSET-TYPE SHELTERS. THE SCHOOL - 10 PUPILS, 1 TEACHER - IS AN OLD QUONSET SKIMPILY EQUIPPED INSIDE AND WITH RUSTING PLAYGROUND EQUIPMENT IN A WEED-GROWN YARD. THE DISPENSARY NEARLY WAS IN EVEN WORSE SHAPE FROM THE EXTERIOR ALTHOUGH WE DID NOT GET INSIDE. THE LITTLE CHAPEL, A STURDY CONCRETE STRUCTURE, DOUBLES AS TYPHOON SHELTER.

6. (U) THERE IS NO OPERABLE TRANSPORTATION ON THE ISLAND WITH THE EXCEPTION OF SOME ~~FEW~~^{SMALL} BULL-CARTS AND AN AGEING JOHN DEERE TRACTOR. CLINGING TO THE LATTER WE WERE DRIVEN TO THE LAKES BY TWO OBLIGING AND COMPETENT YOUNG BOYS ALONG ROUGH TRAILS BUMPING OVER HARD LAVA ROCK ~~OR~~ SLOSHING THROUGH DEEP BLACK MUD. FOR MOST OF THE WAY WE WERE WITHIN THE BIG CRATER BOWL OF A ONE-TIME VOLCANO, AN AREA OF HIGH ~~GRASS~~^{GRASS,} IRONWOOD TREES (THE SO-CALLED MICRONESIAN PINE) AND SCRUB. A DISTRESSING FEATURE WAS CONSTANT PRESENCE OF SWARMS OF BLACK FLIES WHICH MADE THIS AREA, AND MUCH OF THE ISLAND, EXCEEDINGLY UNCOMFORTABLE. NO ONE CAME UP WITH A PLAUSIBLE EXPLANATION OF THEIR PRESENCE IN SUCH NUMBER, BUT ANY DEVELOPMENT OF PAGAN WOULD CERTAINLY REQUIRE ~~INVESTIGATION~~^{INVESTIGATION} INTO THIS UNPLEASANT FEATURE.

7. (U) ON OUR TOUR WE SAW A FLOURISHING FIELD OF PINEAPPLE AND HEAVILY BEARING MANGO TREES. IN THE COURSE OF CONVERSATION WITH THE CITIZENS GATHERED IN A LITTLE THATCH-SHADED PAVILION ABOVE THE BLACK ^{STAND} BEACH, DISTADREP CASTRO ASKED CDR. WESTLAKE IF MILITARY ON GUAM WOULD LIKE TO BUY SOME PAGAN PINEAPPLE. NOTING THE PARTICULARLY FINE SPECIMENS PRESENTED TO US, WESTLAKE SAID HE WOULD LOOK INTO MATTER AND THOUGHT IT LIKELY MILITARY COULD TAKE WHATEVER QUANTITY OF PINEAPPLES PAGAN PREPARED TO DELIVER. CASTRO THOUGHT THIS COULD BE 200 EACH WEEK BUT STRESSED CHRONIC TRANSPORTATION DIFFICULTIES IN SITUATION WHERE FIELD TRIP SHIP CALLS ONLY FOUR TIMES A YEAR. WESTLAKE SAID HE WOULD EXPLORE USE OF SMALL VESSEL ACQUIRED FOR SUCH PURPOSES BY DELA CRUZ FAMILY IN TINIAN.

CASTRO, WHO SEEMED ENERGETIC AND INTERESTED IN IMPROVING THINGS ON PAGAN, NOTED THAT PINEAPPLE CROPS COULD BE STAGGERED TO INCREASE SEASONAL AVAILABILITY.

8. (U) IN ANSWER TO OUR QUERY INTO LAND HOLDINGS AND FARM SYSTEM, CASTRO EXPLAINED THAT ALL OF PAGAN IS PUBLIC LAND AND ALTHOUGH IT HAS BEEN DECLARED ELIGIBLE FOR HOMESTEADING, NO SURVEYING HAS EVER BEEN DONE. NO HOMESTEAD APPLICATIONS HAVE THEREFORE BEEN INITIATED AND PEOPLE FEEL VERY DISCOURAGED ABOUT HAVING NO LAND OF THEIR OWN EVEN AFTER THEY HAVE WORKED IT FOR YEARS. CASTRO SAID THEY WERE ESPECIALLY ^{DISMAYED} ~~DISCOURAGED~~ WHEN KEN JONES WAS GIVEN PERMISSION TO LEASE LAND ON PAGAN FOR HIS HOTEL, WHILE THERE IS STILL NO SIGN THAT PEOPLE OF PAGAN CAN ACTUALLY ACQUIRE THEIR OWN LAND.

9. (U) ASKED ABOUT COPRA MAKING, ONE YOUNG MAN SAID PROUDLY THAT HE AND A FRIEND HAD PREPARED TWO BAGS OF COPRA WITHIN PAST DAY OR TWO. MARKET PRICE, HE NOTED IS GOOD, BUT NO SHIPS TO MOVE IT. THIS, HE OBSERVED, DISCOURAGES COPRA MAKING.

10. (U) PAGAN HAS ELECTRICITY - A FEW HOURS EACH DAY - OR NIGHT FROM A SMALL POWER PLANT. THE ISLAND IS ALMOST BEYOND THE RANGE OF RADIO SAIPAN, BUT CAN NEVERTHELESS PICK UP SOME BROADCASTS. THE WEEKLY CESSNA FLIGHT NOW BRINGS MAIL AND COPIES OF THE PACIFIC DAILY NEWS FROM GUAM. ANSWERING A QUESTION, CASTRO SAID MNS RELEASES ARE NOT RECEIVED.

11. (U) MOST PEOPLE WE SAW, EXCEPT THE VERY OLD, SEEMED TO UNDERSTAND ENGLISH. THEY SHOWED LITTLE INTEREST HOWEVER IN MENTION BY STATUS LNO OF RECENT MARIANAS STATUS TALKS. CASTRO WAS INTERESTED AND COPY OF MAY 31 COMMUNIQUE WAS LEFT WITH HIM.

12. (U) A BIT OF POSSIBLE, IF UNLIKELY DRAMA IS BROUGHT TO THE BACKWATER ASPECT OF PAGAN BY NOTATION IN TALKING PAPER PREPARED BY JAPANESE GOVERNMENT CONCERNING MISSIONS FOR RETRIEVAL OF JAPANESE WAR REMAINS IN MICRONESIA. THE JAPANESE OFFICIAL MISSION PLANS TO CARRY OUT SUCH RECOVERY ACTIVITY ON PAGAN IN OCTOBER-NOVEMBER AND TO "LOOK INTO THE POSSIBILITY OF 26 FORMER JAPANESE

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SOLDIERS STRAGGLING ON THE ISLAND."

13. (U) HOMEWARD TRIP BROUGHT THREE ADDITIONAL PASSENGERS - SAIPANESE (CAROLINIANS) WHO HAD BEEN VISITING RELATIVES ON PAGAN. ONE CLUTCHED A SMALL FRUIT BAT, PRIME DELICACY FOR SAIPANESE, WHILE ON THE DECK OF THE AIRCRAFT FOUR BIG COCONUT CRABS, TRUSSED UP WITH COCONUT FIBRE AND LOOKING LIKE SOMETHING THAT EVOLUTION FORGOT, RATTLED AROUND EN ROUTE TO SELECT SAIPAN AND TINIAN DINNER TABLES.

14. (U) COMMENT: THE DERELICT APPEARANCE OF THE LITTLE SETTLEMENT TOGETHER WITH THE GENERALLY DISPIRITED, THOUGH QUITE FRIENDLY, MANNER OF THE PEOPLE MADE US FEEL THAT YEARS OF APPARENT NEGLECT WILL HAVE TO BE OVERCOME AND SOME SUBSTANTIVE MOVES MADE TO IMPROVE CONDITIONS FOR THIS TINY GROUP OF PEOPLE ON A VERY BEAUTIFUL ISLAND WHICH HAS PROSPECT OF BECOMING PART OF THE UNITED STATES.

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