

IG

PDN 6/28/74

Marianas

## Editorial

# Marianas And Military....

There wasn't anything really new in James Webb's discussion of military strategy as it relates to Guam, and Micronesia—it is just that he tells it better than anybody else.

Webb, a former Marine Captain, a Vietnam veteran, and now a final year law student at Georgetown University, spoke to the Guam Chamber of Commerce Wednesday, explaining to them his theories on what the United States military strategy is going to be like in the Pacific.

The young, affable scholar-writer, is working in Guam this summer, studying the military land needs for the Territorial Planning Commission. His book on the subject, "Micronesia and the U.S. Pacific Strategy" will be published this September.

In a way, Webb is a rarity. He is among the first to show either any interest in political strategy for the Pacific—as a civilian—and any expertise in the field. He doesn't speak for the military in these matters, although it is obvious that he has the ear of the military. Despite his youth, he deals with the subject of the Pacific with authority.

Many of his points are well taken.

The United States, as we all know, is gradually re-deploying its military forces from forward positions in Asia to areas like the Marianas in which it has more political influence. He states "that the Marianas Islands most likely will be the focal point of the redeployment. For very sound strategic and economic reasons, it appears that the U.S. military will consolidate its Pacific forces on a Guam-Tinian axis during the coming 10 to 15 years."

Webb doesn't believe that high-level Pentagon planners are thinking of Guam and Tinian in terms of either an offensive or a defensive base. Guam doesn't have the physical capability, he said, to house a strong enough force to intimidate Asia. On the other hand, the Soviet Union—with its 95 nuclear submarines—doesn't need to strike Guam before it can attack the mainland U.S.

"The nature of our future mission here," as he envisions it, "is as an operational, political presence; mainly a seapower presence, with a continued strategic air capability that will provide a credible-enough show of force to insure area stability vis-a-vis the other major powers."

The U.S., in slowly pulling out of mainland Asia, is disavowing the old Truman Doctrine, in which the U.S. set themselves as world policemen, to protect the status quo, and to keep other countries from being attacked by armed minorities. Now, Webb concludes, the U.S. is slowly switching to the application of the Nixon Doctrine, proclaimed significantly enough, right here on Guam. The Nixon Doctrine, in effect, says that the U.S. is no longer going to get

involved in wars that the Asian people should be fighting themselves. While the U.S. will continue to honor its commitments abroad, what this really means is that the U.S. will eventually pull all our forces, including ground, air, and sea units, from Asian bases. This determination has been shored up by political considerations. More, and more, there are adverse reactions to having U.S. military units stationed in foreign countries. Still another consideration is economic, as Webb noted.

Logically, what that means is that the U.S. will fall back, as they say. As long as Guam, and the Marianas are part of the U.S. political family, and have the land available, it would make sense that we pull back to the Marianas, and not all the way to Hawaii. Thus, the U.S. as a Pacific nation, will still have a foot in the door in the Western Pacific, without having all the political and economic hassle.

What does all this mean for Guam?

Webb, characteristically diplomatic, wouldn't play the numbers game. He neatly side-stepped a question as to what numbers we're talking about in terms of five, to ten years away, largely because those figures change, and because many decisions still haven't been made as to ultimate redeployment. Specifically, he sees a future U.S. naval presence in the Pacific that might—and he makes it plain his opinion is but an educated guess—consist of three carrier task forces forward; a full regiment afloat; another in Hawaii; and a third based on Guam or Tinian—most probably Tinian. Supplementing the local task force could be a full division of Marines, plus an air wing and additional Air Force units, including a tactical fighter group.

Although Apra Harbor may be able to service a complete U.S. Navy task force, Webb believes the only ships to be permanently stationed forward of Hawaii will be destroyer squadrons similar to the one coming to Guam next year. The task force afloat, he said, would visit Apra Harbor for repairs.

Tinian, on the other hand, probably can expect a lot more military personnel than figures previously given. The official word is that 2,500 military men and their dependents will be relocated on Tinian with the Air Force as executive agent, but operated jointly with the Navy—a unique undertaking in itself.

Numbers? No, we won't go into either because there just are too many variables. But, if Webb is correct in his assumptions, and if the Nixon Doctrine is adhered to, and if the Pentagon is listened to over the next 10 years, and if there is no national crisis on leadership, economy, or energy, it stands to reason that a substantial share of those more than 100,000 U.S. servicemen now in Okinawa, Thailand, Taiwan, Korea, the Philippines, and Japan will find their way to the Marianas. A Marine Division? Not likely. An aircraft carrier support base? Possible. But certainly, Guam's role as a supply and logistic center, and as a communication center will continue to climb. There is no reason to suspect, as Webb points out, that there will be any decline in military activity on Guam in the years immediately ahead.

Webb did manage to put the picture of what is happening, and what is going to happen in a much better perspective. His main point was the continuing importance of Guam, and the emerging importance of Tinian, and the Marianas to U.S. military strategy in the Pacific. We can't help but see it the same way. JCM.