

760
Marianas

Marianas Needed for Base

U.S. to Get New Territory

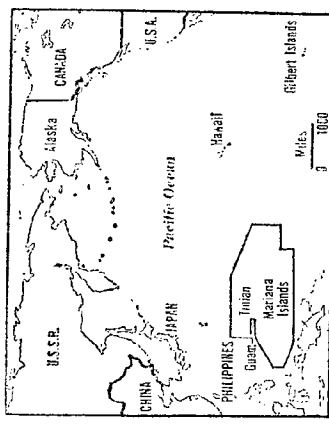
By Don Oberdorfer
Washington Post Foreign Service

TOKYO, July 6.—The United States is about to acquire the first permanent addition to its territory since the purchase of the Virgin Islands half a century ago.

The new American domain is the proposed Commonwealth of the Northern Marianas, a thinly populated island chain, 5,000 miles from California in the far Pacific.

Negotiations that have taken place without much notice over the past 14 months have recently resolved nearly all the fundamental questions between representatives of the islanders and the U.S. delegation headed by special presidential representative Franklin Hayden Williams. In an interview this week, Williams said he hopes for agreement on final terms this fall and early submission to the U.S. Congress possibly as soon as the beginning of next year.

The major reason for American interest in the new territory is a Pentagon plan to build a \$300 million air-naval base on Tinian, the flat-topped volcanic island from which the U.S. Air Force launched its 1945 atomic bomb raids on Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Japan, which had used Tinian and nearby Saipan as major bases until pushed off by bloody



U.S. landings in World War II, is 1,500 miles away.

Since the end of World War II the Northern Marianas and other parts of the vast mid-Pacific empire of Micronesia ("Land of the small islands") have been administered by the United States as a trusteeship under United Nations auspices. Although the United States pledged to work for an early end of the trusteeship with self-government and independence for the island peoples, little progress had been made toward such goals until the past few years.

The proposed Tinian Base and the U.S. installations on Guam, at the southern

U.S. MARIANAS, A25, Col I

U.S. to Get Pacific Territory

MARIANAS, From AI

end at the Marianas chain—already a U.S. territory, acquired from the Spanish in 1898—are widely expected to be the American "fallback position" in the western Pacific when and if U.S. forces leave South Korea, mainland Japan, Okinawa, the Philippines, Taiwan and other base areas.

U.S. negotiator Williams said there are "no present plans" to redeploy major U.S. operational units to Tinian from elsewhere in Asia, but he did not deny that such a possibility exists for the future. "The plans are to go forward (with the Tinian base) regardless of whether we redeploy," Williams said.

Williams, who is chairman of the San Francisco-based Asia Foundation, said the Joint Chiefs of Staff and Defense Department have determined a national "requirement" for the Tinian base "including air operations and forward deployment of war materiel and war reserves." According to Williams, President Nixon approved the military plan in 1971 and reaffirmed it in 1972 following a National Security Council review.

So far Congress has not been asked to authorize either the proposed base on Tinian or commonwealth status for the Northern Marianas chain, of which the island is a part. Nevertheless, detailed planning for construction of the base is far along, including projections of a permanent U.S. garrison of 2,500 men and their families.

As part of the commonwealth negotiations, the United States has "tentatively agreed" to pay \$13.5 million yearly for seven years plus \$3 million yearly in federal services to support the palm tree and-coconut domain. The population of the proposed U.S. commonwealth would be about 14,000, a little less than that of Hyattsville or Chevy Chase, Md.

Williams said he has consulted informally on the plan to expand U.S. territory with key lawmakers who "led me to believe Congress is favorably disposed and encouraged me in our efforts."

As a public-relations exercise and small-scale test of what is to come, about 250 U.S. Marines staged a landing on Tinian last month from a warship off the coast. The first Marines to hit the beach of the rugged island since World War II spent most of their onshore time painting churches, giving barbecues, repairing Jeeps and doing other volunteer chores for the islanders.

Most of the residents of Tinian, Saipan and the other inhabited parts of the proposed Commonwealth of the Northern Marianas are believed to favor permanent affiliation with the United States. However, no test votes have been taken recently, and a proposed referendum on Tinian alone was vetoed by U.S. authorities early this year, on the ground that this is a decision for the entire Northern Marianas

The United States has been engaged in sporadic negotiations since 1959 with Micronesia as a whole, looking toward a "free-association" status in which the far-flung islands voluntarily affiliate with the United States for defense purposes and permit continued American use of the missile-testing facilities in the Marshall Islands. In May 1972 the Northern Marianas group chose to carve out a separate future for itself as a U.S. commonwealth, and negotiations to this end began in May 1973. Presidential representative Williams, who is also chief negotiator in the "free-association" with the rest of Micronesia, said this week that have been reached on key issues, including the dollar support level for the "free-association" group. He declined to disclose the dollar figure or other details of the proposed agreement, which is to be discussed anew next week in a U.S.-Micronesian conference on Guam.

1974