



INTERNATIONAL SECURITY AFFAIRS

ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF DEFENSE
WASHINGTON, D. C. 20301

24 SEP 1974

In reply refer to:
I-8365/74

File
[Signature]
(41)

Honorable Patsy T. Mink
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Mrs. Mink:

Secretary Schlesinger has asked me to respond to your letter of September 12, 1974 regarding Mayor Mendiola's letter referencing the Island of Tinian.

As you may recall from Ambassador Haydn Williams' briefings of Congressional committees, the United States, since December 1972 has held four formal rounds of negotiations with the Marianas Political Status Commission (MPSC), which includes two representatives of Tinian among its fifteen members. We reached agreement on most substantive points which would bring the Marianas District under US sovereignty and establish it as a commonwealth once the Trusteeship is terminated. As part of the negotiations the MPSC unanimously agreed to make available to the federal government 17,475 acres of land in the island of Tinian to be developed over the next seven years as a major joint services military base. This comprises about two-thirds of the twenty-five thousand acres on the island. For over twenty years almost half of the total area required, in both the northern and central part of the island, has been under US lease of indefinite duration for military use and set aside as so-called "military retention land." The remainder will have to be acquired.

Tinian Mayor Felipe Mendiola's letter speaks to this issue. Mr. Mendiola, who recently won a close election for Mayor on Tinian, has been thoroughly informed of our military needs on Tinian and of the decisions of the MPSC. However, he successfully campaigned for election on a platform to reduce military land requirements on Tinian and it is not surprising that he and a number of his constituents are not enthusiastic about having the federal government acquire this additional land. Others on Tinian welcome the US presence, however, and I understand they are forwarding a counter-petition. The decision of the MPSC which was agreed to by the two representatives from Tinian appears to represent a position agreed to by a large majority of all the Mariana Islands citizens. Moreover, Mayor Mendiola is not totally opposed to the presence of a military base

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on Tinian. He is seeking to confine the military to some 9,000 acres of land which clearly would not be enough to construct a useful multi-service base on the island. Our military planners would normally use over 28,000 acres of land for a base of the size contemplated, however the total land required has been reduced by overlapping complementary activities which normally would be separated. It is not possible to reduce the land area further and maintain the integrity of the multi-service base concept. Further, it should be noted that the total population of Tinian is less than 800 persons out of a total of 15,000 in the Marianas as a whole.

I trust this information will more fully explain the current status of the Marianas negotiations.

Sincerely,

SIGNED

T. J. Bigley
Rear Admiral, USN
Director, East Asia & Pacific Region

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