

DECLASSIFIED

MICRONESIAN INDEPENDENT
Majuro, Marshall Islands
October 29, 1974, Page 1

Page 1 of 3
Encl. No. 1
A-16 from Solpan

US LAND GRAB GOES UNNOTICED BY AMERICANS

by Roger Gale copyright Pacific News Service

TINIAN - The United States may soon make its first outright territorial acquisition in more than half a century -- the proposed commonwealth of the Marianas, I^l Islands located 1600 miles off the Asian mainland. Already administered by the US under a United Nations trusteeship, the islands would become formal US territory through an act of Congress.

The driving force behind the acquisition effort is the Pentagon, which has begun plans to construct a \$300 million air and naval base on Tinian, the flat-topped volcanic island in the Marianas chain from which the US launched the B-29s that dropped atomic bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

The Pentagon views the Tinian base as part of the Nixon doctrine's goal to secure more strategic "fallback positions." Along with nearby Guam -- a US territory since the Spanish American war -- Tinian will be the early military complex in the Pacific on US owned land.

Unknown to the public,

and not yet a major Congressional issue, private talks aimed at an agreement on the acquisition have been underway for some time between a personal representative of the President (who holds the rank of Ambassador) and a group of Marianas islanders.

Like the 2,000 islands that make up the rest of Micronesia, the Marianas came under US control with the defeat of Japanese forces during World War II. Last year, however, the US announced it had agreed to return Micronesian land to the Micronesians, with the understanding that the Micronesians would submit to a "formal commitment to accommodate Pentagon needs" in "good faith." Now, while the rest of Micronesia is pressing for self-government and independence, the Marianas negotiating team is pushing for full US territorial status.

According to Edward Pangelinan, chairman of the Marianas Political Status Commission, "the 14,000 people of the Marianas want to become part of the American family as soon as possible."



SENATOR PANGELINAN

Pangelinan, along with a number of other members of the negotiating team, has been involved in land speculation on Tinian. Before the US placed a moratorium on all land transactions on the island last year, the negotiators were buying up land from those few Tinian residents who owned their own homesteads -- planning to sell it either to the military or to gambling and resort interests. Pangelinan is himself an attorney for the reputedly underworld-controlled Bally Corporation -- the largest

underworld-controlled Bally Corporation -- the largest manufacturer of slot machines in the world.

Chief US negotiator F. Hayden Williams says talk with the Marianas representatives have "resolved

DECLASSIFIED

12-428046

nearly all fundamental questions," and predicts a final agreement will be reached this fall, allowing the acquisition to be submitted for Congressional approval next year. Williams, a Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense from 1958 to 1962, is now president of The Asia Foundation, a San Francisco based organization that funds education



of projects and that according to the New York Times -- has been closely linked to the CIA.

PENTAGON PLANS

Pentagon plans call for turning two-thirds of the Manhattan-shaped island into a combined air base, supply depot, and Marine guerrilla training base -- with live air and naval bombardment of the island. Williams, however, assures the people that "military operations and their noise will not disturb them."

Since plans for the base were first announced in May 1973, the number of troops to be stationed there has more than tri-

pled. During war exercises, as many as 13,000 troops are slated to be on the island.

The Pentagon also plans to maintain control of two parcels of land on nearby Saipan (where the CIA trained Chinese Nationalist guerrillas between 1951-62) and to continue use of its target range on a small uninhabited island 45 miles north of Tinton.

RICH AND FERTILE

Tinton is Micronesia's most fertile and productive island, with 900 people living and farming on 40 square miles. Ben Manglano, Tinton's agronomist, asserts that "Tinton could easily feed everyone in Micronesia."

This winter Tinton even plans to sell watermelon and cantaloupe in West Coast markets. A cattle ranch on the island is already supplying Micronesia's beef and pork and will soon begin producing the first fresh milk in the Western Pacific. But Manglano complains that "it will be a little difficult to be farmers when the Pentagon plans to turn our best land into an airbase. All they plan to leave us is a rocky hillside."

FIGHTING THE TAKE OVER

As the Pentagon quietly pursues its acquisition plans, supported by speculators from Saipan, opposition to the take-over



BENAIM NAKAYAMA

is mounting. The United Nations Trusteeship Council is repeatedly on record in opposition to the private Marlonas talks. The Congress of Micro-

nesia also opposes the talks and, says Tasiwo Nakayama, president of the Senate, "Micronesia must remain united; we will continue to oppose any US attempt to dismember our nation."

In response to US cancellation last spring of a referendum drawn up by the Tinton council, more than half of the adult population signed a petition opposing US plans, calling for an end to the talks, and saying they no longer wished to be represented by the present Marlonas negotiators. Williams refused to accept the petition.

When Williams announced that a surveying team would be visiting the island in September, Tinton's newly elected mayor, Felipe Mendiola, replied in a letter, "You and your surveyors are not at all welcome on the island of Tinton. Be guided accordingly."

12-428047

CONFIDENTIAL



Mendiola is also head of the newly formed Union Committee for Justice, which plans to send a delegation to Washington to lobby against the base.

Although Congress has not yet been asked to authorize construction of the base, the House Appropriations Committee said last month that "It doubts that construction of a new base complex can be justified." And a number of congressmen, including Senator Alan Cranston (D-Calif) and Congressman Ronald Dellums (D-Calif) are already on record against its construction.

As a hedge against the possibility that Congress may refuse to appropriate funds, one Navy source says that Seabees from Guam may be called in to begin construction -- as they were during the first phase of building several years ago on Diego Garcia in the Indian Ocean. (The Defense Department appropriates general funds for Seabee construction)

CONFIDENTIAL

work".) In addition, Force plans call for a "bare base capability" that will allow portable base facilities, already in storage in New Mexico, to be used on an interim basis.

But what the Pentagon is really counting on to secure the base is the successful conclusion of the negotiation talks with the Marianas representatives. Although no formal request for acquisition of the Marianas has yet been made to Congress, Williams and other Administration spokesmen are beginning to make appearances before Congressional committees. Philip Burton (D-Calif), chairman of the House subcommittee on Island territories, has already given his tentative vote in favor of the takeover. Congressional approval of the new commonwealth arrangement will facilitate final approval of funds for the base -- which would then be an US territory.

The major stumbling block left in the negotiations comes ironically from the Marianas team, who now find it more lu-

crative to lease the land they have purchased, rather than sell it outright as the Pentagon desires. However, it is doubtful that the talks can be stalled long on the issue. Under international law, the US owns 90 percent of the land in the Marianas, has the power of eminent domain, and even has the power to take back the land it had granted the people of Tinian as homesteads. This means that neither the Marianas negotiators nor the opponents of the takeover have much real bargaining power.



PH. BALAS

"As far as the Trust Territory goes," says Micronesian Congressman A-taji Balas, "it is the Micronesians who have the trust, and the Americans who have the territory."