

# Issue of lands delays trust islands accord

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Negotiations on the political destiny of the Trust Territory of the Pacific are moving ahead, with land matters apparently still to be ironed out before final agreement can be reached on a "free association" compact.

After two days of talks here, a negotiator for the Congress of Micronesia said an understanding was reached with the United States on the compact and executive action is planned for the return of public lands.

"We were informed that the Interior Department is in the process of preparing an executive order for the High Commissioner to effect the return of public lands," said Sen. Lazarus Saliu, negotiator for the Congress of Micronesia.

SALI SAID he has no idea what the executive order will contain or when it will be issued.

Earlier this year, a bill passed by the Congress of Micronesia providing for the return of public lands was vetoed by High Commissioner Edward E. Johnston. The veto was issued because of a technical problem with the bill.

The Micronesians are now seeking the return of lands by administrative rather than legislative action.

Saliu declined to provide details on the talks here, but a source said final agreement on the compact is pending negotiations on the title and different uses of the land. The United States is seeking agreement on future uses for military purposes of Micronesian land, particularly on the island of Palau.

THE SOURCE said the United States wants a change in the timing of the defense arrangements with Micronesia, getting it nailed down before completing the final draft of the compact. The negotiators reportedly want to wrap things up by January.

The source said tentative agreement was reached on most of the changes made in the draft compact in Guam earlier this year. But, the source said, there are still some minor areas to be worked on such as citizenship.

The "free association" compact would give Micronesians internal autonomy while the United States would take care of foreign policy and defense matters.

American negotiators led by Ambassador Franklin Nady Williams also conducted talks last week with representatives of the Mariana Islands. The Marianas are close to negotiating a "commonwealth" relationship with the United States, something akin to Guam.

UNDER THE commonwealth relationship, the Marianas would be added to the United States territories and would be provided with Federal services.

Negotiators hope to have a text of an agreement on separate status for the Marianas when formal talks begin on Saipan on Dec. 2.