

(MPSC HOLDS 5TH ROUND OF TALKS)

SAIPAN, DEC. 5 (MNS) ~~74~~ THE FIFTH SESSION OF THE MARIANAS STATUS NEGOTIATIONS OPENED TODAY DEC. 5, AT THE ROYAL TAGE HOTEL IN SAIPAN BEFORE A CROWD OF ABOUT 600 PEOPLE. CHAIRMAN EDWARD DLG. PANGELINAN OF THE MARIANAS POLITICAL STATUS COMMISSION INTRODUCED AMBASSADOR FRANKLIN HAYDN WILLIAMS WHO THANKED THE MARIANAS POLITICAL STATUS COMMISSION FOR INVITING THE US DELEGATION TO SAIPAN. | |

AMBASSADOR WILLIAMS SET FORTH AND DESCRIBED THE TWENTY YEAR HISTORY OF THE EVENTS LEADING TO THE PRESENT NEGOTIATION. BEGINNING IN 1950 WHEN THE MARIANAS HOUSE OF COUNCIL AND HOUSE OF COMMISSIONERS FORWARDED A PETITION STATING THAT THE MARIANAS ISLANDS DISTRICT WISHED TO BE INCORPORATE INTO THE U.S. AS AN AMERICAN POSSESSION OR TERRITORY. THE AMBASSADOR MENTIONED SEVERAL MORE PETITIONS AND REFERENDA FROM THE LEADERS OF THE MARIANAS DISTRICT UP TO 1971 WHEN BY LEGISLATIVE RESOLUTION NO. 30 THE MARIANAS DISTRICT LEGISLATURE ADVISED THE TRUSTEESHIP COUNCIL AND THE SECURITY COUNCIL IN FORCEFUL LANGUAGE OF ITS DESIRE FOR IMMEDIATE SEPARATE STATUS AND UNION WITH THE UNITED STATES. THE AMBASSADOR THEN SAID THAT A COMMONWEALTH RELATIONSHIP WOULD MEAN THAT THE NORTHERN MARIANAS WOULD WRITE AND ADOPT ITS OWN CONSTITUTION, WOULD ELECT ITS OWN GOVERNOR, WOULD ELECT ITS OWN LEGISLATIVE BODIES AND WOULD HAVE ITS OWN COURT AND JUDGES. AMBASSADOR EMPHASIZED THAT KEEPING THE PEOPLE INFORMED IS ESSENTIAL TO THE SUCCESSFUL CONCLUSION OF THE NEGOTIATIONS. HE SAID "THE PEOPLE OF THE NORTHERN MARIANAS NEED TO KNOW AND IS CERTAINLY IS THEIR RIGHT TO KNOW THE FACTS FOR IN A MOST DIRECT SENSE." IT IS THEIR AND THEIR CHILDREN'S FUTURE WHICH WE ARE CONSIDERING.

AMBASSADOR WILLIAMS CONCLUDED HIS REMARK BY SAYING "HERE IN YOUR ISLANDS WE ARE WORKING TOGETHER IN A SPIRIT OF COOPERATION TOWARDS THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A NEW COMMONWEALTH WHICH WILL BE BASED ON THE SAME SOLID PRINCIPLE OF GOVERNMENT BY THE CONSENT OF THE GOVERNED. LET US STEADILY CONTINUED TOWARD THE COMPLETION OF THE TASK THAT HAS BEEN GIVEN US, CONSCIOUS OF ITS FULL MEANING AND IMPORTANCE AND DEDICATED TO ITS FULFILLMENT.

CHAIRMAN PANGELINAN THEN FORMALLY WELCOMED THE U.S. DELEGATION TO SAIPAN. HE BEGAN HIS REMARK BY EMPHASIZING THAT FIRST, THE PEOPLE OF THE MARIANAS DO NOT WANT THE TRUSTEESHIP AGREEMENT TO GO ON INDEFINITELY. SECOND, THE PEOPLE OF THE NORTHERN MARIANAS ARE READY FOR SELF-GOVERNMENT. THIRD, THAT THE PEOPLE OF THE NORTHERN MARIANAS PLACE A HIGH VALUE OF FREEDOM AND THE DEMOCRATIC FORM OF GOVERNMENT WHICH MARKS THE AMERICAN POLITICAL SYSTEM; AND FOURTH THE MARIANAS POLITICAL STATUS COMMISSION WAS CREATED TO PLAN FOR THE FUTURE AND NOT TO RECAPTURE THE PAST.

CHAIRMAN PANGELINAN THEN DESCRIBED IN VERY GREAT DETAIL THE MAJOR SECTIONS OF THE DRAFT STATUS AGREEMENT NOTING THAT THEIR ARE STILL IMPORTANT AND SERIOUS ISSUES WHICH MUST BE RESOLVED BEFORE THE FINAL STATUS AGREEMENT IS PRESENTED TO THE DISTRICT LEGISLATURE TO THE PEOPLE OF THE NORTHERN MARIANAS AND TO THE U.S. CONGRESS. HE STRESSED THAT ONE KEY ISSUE REMAINING IS HOW THE UNITED STATES WILL ACQUIRE THE LAND IT NEEDS. HE SAID THAT "LAND IS THE MOST PRECIOUS RESOURCE OF THE NORTHERN MARIANAS" AND PROPOSED AN ARRANGEMENT WHEREBY THE U.S. WOULD LEASE THE LAND IT NEEDS FOR FIFTY YEARS WITH THE OPTION TO RENEW THE LEASE FOR ADDITIONAL FIFTY YEARS. HE NOTED THAT A FAIR PRICE FOR THE LAND MUST ALSO BE DETERMINED.

CHAIRMAN PANGELINAN TALKED ALSO ABOUT THE PROBLEMS RELATING TO WAR CLAIMS, THE RETURN OF PUBLIC LANDS AND HOMESTEADING. WITH RESPECT TO HOMESTEADING ON TINIAN, THE CHAIRMAN SAID THAT A HIGHER PRIORITY MUST BE ASSIGNED TO SOLVING THAT PROBLEM AND ALLOCATING THE NECESSARY MONEY TO CONDUCT WHATEVER SURVEYS ARE

NEEDED. CHAIRMAN PANGELINAN CONCLUDED HIS REMARK BY SAYING THE MARIANAS POLITICAL STATUS COMMISSION REPRESENTS "A WHOLE VARIETY OF INTEREST, ..THE POLITICAL PARTIES THE ETHNIC GROUP THE INDIVIDUALS ISLANDS, THE LEGISLATIVE BODIES AND THE BUSINESS COMMUNITY OF THE NORTHERN MARIANAS. HOWEVER WE ON THE COMMISSION ARE UNITED BEHIND TWO PRINCIPLES WHICH WE BELIEVE WILL HELP BRING THE NEGOTIATIONS TO A SUCCESSFUL CONCLUSION. WE DEEPLY BELIEVE THAT A CLOSE AND ENDURING RELATIONSHIP WITH THE UNITED STATES IN THE FORM OF A COMMONWEALTH STATUS IS WHAT THE PEOPLE WANT. AND WE ARE DETERMINED TO START THE MARCH TOWARDS COMMONWEALTH STATUS BY SIGNING A STATUS AGREEMENT AS SOON AS--BUT NOT ONE MOMENT BEFORE--ALL OF THE ISSUES RAISED BY OUR NEGOTIATIONS ARE RESOLVED IN A WAY WHICH FULLY PROTECTS THE INTERESTS OF OUR PEOPLE."

(CALL USERS: PLEASE CREDIT CONGRESS OF MICRONESIA)
(SALII'S STATEMENT ON PUBLIC LANDS)

SAIPAN, DEC. 5 (CONGRESS RELEASE)---SENATOR LAZARUS SALII, CHAIRMAN OF THE CONGRESS OF MICRONESIA'S JOINT COMMITTEE ON FUTURE STATUS, ISSUED A STATEMENT THURSDAY CLARIFYING STATEMENTS BY U.S. AMBASSADOR FRANKLIN H. WILLIAMS WHICH IMPLIED THAT DETAILS OF U.S. PUBLIC LAND POLICY HAD BEEN ENDORSED BY HIS COMMITTEE DURING RECENT NEGOTIATIONS.

SALII SAID THE U.S. LAND POLICY, WHICH HAS NOW BECOME THE BASIS OF A DEPARTMENT OF INTERIOR PLAN TO RETURN MICRONESIAN PUBLIC LANDS BY AN ORDER OF THE SECRETARY OF INTERIOR, WAS NEVER AGREED TO BY HIS COMMITTEE, DESPITE STATEMENTS TO THE CONTRARY BY WILLIAMS.

SALII NOTED, HOWEVER, THAT DURING THE LAST FULL ROUND OF NEGOTIATIONS THE JOINT COMMITTEE DID ENDORSE "IN PRINCIPLE" THE U.S. COMMITMENT TO RETURN THE LANDS BACK TO THEIR RIGHTFUL OWNERS. DURING INFORMAL DISCUSSIONS WITH WILLIAMS, CONTINUED SALII, "WE MADE CLEAR OUR PREFERENCE TO RETURN THE LANDS HAD TO BE RETURNED BY EXECUTIVE ORDER, THEN WE MUST BE PERMITTED TO PARTICIPATE IN THE DRAFTING PROCESS AND THE FINAL DOCUMENT MUST BE ENDORSED BY OUR JOINT COMMITTEE ON FUTURE STATUS."

"THE REASON FOR THIS," EXPLAINED SALII, "IS THE FACT THAT THE UNITED STATES HAS ATTACHED EIGHT CONDITIONS THEY FEEL MUST BE MET BEFORE THE LANDS CAN BE RETURNED TO THE PEOPLE OF MICRONESIA."

AGREEMENTS WERE REACHED ON ONLY HALF OF THESE EIGHT CONDITIONS, HE SAID, AND THESE WERE INCLUDED IN THE CONGRESS' LAND BILL. OPPOSITION TO THE REMAINING FOUR CONDITIONS WERE THE BASIS OF THE VETO OF THE BILL BY THE INTERIOR DEPARTMENT, HE SAID.

"AS EARLY AS NOVEMBER 1973, THE JOINT COMMITTEE RESPONDED TO THE U.S. POLICY STATEMENT ON THE RETURN OF PUBLIC LANDS SAYING THE CONDITIONS SET FORTH BY THE U.S. WOULD BE 'GENERALLY ACCEPTABLE' TO OUR DELEGATION, BUT ONLY IF CERTAIN ISSUES WERE SATISFACTORILY RESOLVED."

THESE ISSUES, ACCORDING TO SALII, INCLUDED EMINENT DOMAIN POWERS, MILITARY LAND, MILITARY RETENTION LANDS, LANDS NOW LEASED BY THE TRUST TERRITORY GOVERNMENT, AND PROVISIONS CONCERNING LAND NEGOTIATIONS IN THE FUTURE."

"THE TRANSCRIPTS OF THE SEVENTH ROUND OF TALKS SHOW THE JOINT COMMITTEE NAMED THESE ISSUES AS PROBLEMS TO BE RESOLVED. TO SAY THIS WAS AN ENDORSEMENT IS WRONG," SALII SAID.

CONCERNING EMINENT DOMAIN, SALII SAID THE TRANSCRIPTS SHOW THAT ALTHOUGH MICRONESIA RECOGNIZES THE U.S. WILL HAVE THIS POWER BY VIRTUE OF THE TRUSTEESHIP AGREEMENT, HE SAID MICRONESIA'S DESIRE "IS TO SEE THE RETURN OF ALL PUBLIC LANDS TO THE DISTRICTS AND HAVE THE POWER OF EMINENT DOMAIN CURTAILED AND USED ONLY BY THE DISTRICTS THEMSELVES AS A LAST RESORT, AND NOT BY THE TRUST TERRITORY GOVERNMENT.

SALII SAID MILITARY LANDS ALSO PRESENTS A MAJOR PROBLEM.

"THE TRANSCRIPTS REVEAL THAT WE OBJECTED TO U.S. PUBLIC LAND POLICY OVER THIS ISSUE BECAUSE THE U.S. PROPOSED TO RETURN PUBLIC LANDS ONLY AFTER PROSPECTIVE LANDOWNERS AGREE TO ACCOMMODATE FUTURE U.S. MILITARY LAND REQUIREMENTS IF THEY SHOULD ARISE.

"OUR POSITION WAS THEN AND STILL IS TODAY THAT APPROVAL OF U.S. MILITARY LAND NEEDS IN ADVANCE SHOULD NOT BE A PRECONDITION FOR THE RETURN OF OUR LANDS." SALII DECLARED.

"IN SHORT," CONTINUED SALII, "THESE ARE THE TWO MAJOR REASONS FOR THE VETO OF CONGRESS' BILL TO RETURN PUBLIC LANDS.

THE CONGRESS INCLUDED THESE PROVISIONS IN ITS LAND BILL, WHICH WOULD HAVE GIVEN MORE POWER TO THE DISTRICTS THEMSELVES, INSTEAD OF TO THE CONGRESS OR TO THE TRUST TERRITORY GOVERNMENT. THIS APPARENTLY DID NOT SUIT U.S. INTERESTS. THE U.S. INSISTS THAT THESE EIGHT CONDITIONS, OR "STRINGS," BE ATTACHED TO THE LANDS BEFORE IT IS RETURNED TO OUR PEOPLE."

SALII ADDED THAT FOUR CONDITIONS OUTLINED BY THE U.S. IN ORDER TO RETURN THE LANDS WERE AGREED TO BY THE JOINT COMMITTEE AND INCLUDED IN THE VETOED LAND BILL.

HE SAID THE DEPARTMENT OF INTERIOR'S PLAN TO RETURN THE LANDS BY EXECUTIVE ACTION NOW INSTEAD OF WAITING FOR THE CONGRESS OF MICRONESIA TO CONVENE NEXT MONTH AND POSSIBLY ADOPT A NEW LAND BILL AGREEABLE TO BOTH SIDES CONTRADICT STATEMENTS MADE BY AMBASSADOR WILLIAMS DURING THEIR LAST FULL ROUNDS NEGOTIATIONS. SALII SAID AMBASSADOR WILLIAMS WENT ON RECORD DURING THE TALKS SAYING THE UNITED STATES WOULD BE "VERY FLEXIBLE WITH RESPECT TO IMPLEMENTATION" OF RETURNING MICRONESIAN PUBLIC LANDS BACK TO THE DISTRICTS.

"AMBASSADOR WILLIAM'S WORDS DIRECTLY CONTRADICT THE DEPARTMENT OF INTERIOR'S ACTIONS TODAY," NOTED SALII.