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Week in Review

SUMMARY OF NEWS OF THE TRUST TERRITORY OF THE PACIFIC ISLANDS
Prepared by Micronesian News Service

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MARIANAS STATUS TALKS

The Fifth Round of Status Negotiations between the Marianas Political Status Commission (MPSC) and the United States Delegation concluded this week with a draft Covenant worked out. Both delegations issued a Joint Communique, in which they outline the agreements they reached on virtually all issues that have been raised during the negotiations. According to the Communique, the United States will review certain sections of the Covenant which requires further consultation with the United States Congress. The MPSC will review the provisional agreement with the Marianas District Legislature and others in the Mariana Islands. The Covenant is subject in its entirety to a thorough technical review by both delegations. Following signature, the Covenant will be submitted to the Marianas District Legislature and to the people of the Marianas for their approval and then to the U.S. Congress.

During the negotiations, the United States military land requirements agreement was reached for the first time on price and method of acquisition. Agreement was also reached on increased level of direct U.S. financial assistance. Under the land needs for defense purposes, the U.S. need for land in the Marianas is approximately 7557.5 hectares or 18,182 acres. The land will be leased by the United States for 50 years with an option to renew the lease for another 50 years. The U.S. will make a lump sum payment covering both the initial period and the optional renewal totalling \$19,520,600. In addition, the U.S. has agreed to lease back 2,666 hectares or 6,592 acres for \$1 per acre per year.

On Tinian, the United States will lease 17,799 acres and will lease back 6,548 acres. The total amount of land to be made available to the U.S. is slightly below the original U.S. estimate of need. The reduction was made to permit the Government of the Northern Mariana Islands to retain control over nine acres of valuable land at San Jose Harbor for civilian harbor related purposes. The payment which the U.S. will make for the land it will lease on Tinian will be \$17,500,000.

The United States will lease 177 acres in Tanapag Harbor for \$2,000,000. The land will be used for a public memorial park to honor those who lost their lives during World War II. The United States withdrew its proposal to acquire 485 acres adjacent to Isley Field. The unused, uninhabited island of Farallon de Medinilla will be leased to the United States for \$20,600. With the United States announcement which there will be no military base on Tinian in the near

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future had the effect of reducing the revenues of the new Marianas Government and employment opportunities of the people of the Marianas, in order to compensate for the losses, the U.S. and Marianas Delegation tentatively agreed to increase the following: \$250,000 for the Marianas Housing Authority for low-interest loans for new homes or home improvements for low-income families; and \$250,000 for a special educational and training fund to be used for restraining the people of the Northern Marianas who are dislocated due to the change in political status.

Ambassador Williams assured the MPSC that he would strongly recommend to the Secretary of the Interior that he begin as promptly as possible the separation of the Marianas from the remainder of the Trust Territory. The final session of the negotiations will be held on February 3, 1975 at which time the MPSC and the U.S. will meet to review the final language for the proposed Covenant and, hopefully, to sign these documents.