

MAXIMUM LOCAL CONTROL WILL BE RETAINED

Mariana Isles To Be Commonwealth Of U.S.

By RICHARD H. BOYCE
Script-Howard Staff Writer

WASHINGTON — The Mariana Island in the western Pacific Ocean soon will be the first U.S. territorial acquisition since the Virgin Island were bought from Denmark in 1917.

The United States has administered the Marianas under U.N. trusteeship since 1947. Negotiations expected to conclude in a few months will give the island commonwealth status like Puerto Rico, with maximum local control over local affairs under U.S. sovereignty.

The 13,000 people there will have U.S. citizenship, if they wish, but with their own constitution and government. The United States would retain responsibility for their defense and foreign affairs.

The principal islands of the group, Saipan, Tinian and Rota, figured prominently in World War II when U.S. forces wrested them from the Japanese. U.S. bombers took off from Tinian to drop atomic bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

The United States will expand those Tinian runways into a major naval and Air Force facility costing an

estimated \$150 million.

U.S. need for the Marianas grew after the United States agreed to return Okinawa to Japan and reduce American military will write a constitution, the people there vote on it, and the proposal will be submitted to the U.S. Congress for approval.

Geographically, the Marianas group includes Guam, but Guam is not involved in the negotiations because it has been an unincorporated U.S. territory since this country won it from Spain in the 1898 Spanish-American war.

The new status of the other Mariana Islands may produce some friction among Guams 80,000 native Chamorros, for the smaller islands will have a greater degree of local autonomy than Guam.

Guam's people are U.S. citizens and have one nonvoting delegate in the U.S. House of Representatives — the Marianas' people may get one, too — but Congress Guam's constitution and only Congress can change it, while the new Marianas constitution will be subject to change only by its own people.

The United States also is negotiating a change in its relationship with the people of the other islands in the

U.N. trusteeship. But instead of making U.S. territory of the Marshall, Caroline and Palau Islands and related coral atolls—known as Micronesia—these negotiations aim at a compact of free association.

In these groups are some 2,000 islands totaling 700 square miles spread over three million square miles of Pacific Ocean. Their population is 100,000, and only 86 islands are inhabited.

Instead of yielding their sovereignty to the United States, as the Marianas will do, Micronesia wants to retain its sovereignty but make the United States responsible for its defense and foreign affairs.

Under this "associated territory" relationship, Micronesians will not have U.S. citizenship but probably will have the right to terminate the association and become fully independent if they so vote. Or the United States could give Micronesia full independence.

Marianas