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ATTEMPTED TO PULL THE STRICKEN VESSEL OF THE REEF, BUT IT, TOO, GOT ITSELF GROUNDING DURING THE PROCESS.

THE CAPTAIN OF THE FIRST SHIP, SUIN HIN JU, IS STILL ON BOARD THE SECOND SHIP ALTHOUGH HIS CREW HAD LEFT WITH THE THREE VESSELS THAT CAME TO THE RESCUE. NO NAME OR SIZE OF THE SECOND VESSEL WAS GIVEN.

ON BOARD ONE OF THE THREE VESSELS THAT CAME TO THE RESCUE WERE BODIES OF SEVEN DEAD CREWMEN. A TT MEDICAL OFFICER FROM THE MICRONESIA PRINCESS WENT ABOARD TO EXAMINE THE BODIES BUT COULD NOT DETERMINE THE CAUSE OF DEATH. THAT SHIP WAS ORDERED TO SAIL AWAY FROM THE VICINITY. (FULL REPORT UNAVAILABLE)

THE MICRONESIA PRINCESS IS STILL IN THE VICINITY AWAITING WORD FROM SAIPAN ON WHETHER TO REMOVE THE OIL AND FUEL ON THE TWO GROUNDING VESSELS.

"WE HAVE NOTIFIED THE TAIWANESE GOVERNMENT THAT WE WANT TO REMOVE THE FUEL ON THE FIRST VESSEL," MACKENZIE SAID. "IF WE CANNOT REMOVE THE FUEL, WE WANT THE TAIWANESE GOVERNMENT TO GUARANTEE THAT THEY WILL PAY FOR THEIR REMOVAL AND ANY DAMAGE THAT MAY OCCUR AT A LATER DATE," HE SAID.

THE CREWMEN OF THE SECOND VESSEL ARE STILL ON BOARD THE SHIP AWAITING REPATRIATION.

(ALL USERS: PLEASE CREDIT CONGRESS OF MICRONESIA)

(CONGRESSMEN REACT TO U.S. CONGRESS ACTION)

SAIPAN, MAR. 20 (CONGRESS RELEASE)---MARIANAS CONGRESSMEN OSCAR C. RASA AND JOSE MAFNAS SAID THIS WEEK THAT RECENT APPROVAL OF AN AUTHORIZATION MEASURE BY THE UNITED STATES SENATE TO PROVIDE FUNDS FOR TRANSITION OF THE MARIANAS INTO AN AMERICAN COMMONWEALTH WAS A "MINOR VICTORY" FOR U.S. MILITARY INTERESTS, BUT THEY PREDICTED THAT THE MARIANAS COVENANT WILL NOT BE APPROVED BY THE U.S. CONGRESS LATER THIS YEAR, IN ITS PRESENT FORM.

RASA, WHO RETURNED FROM WASHINGTON THIS WEEK AFTER MEETINGS WITH KEY MEMBERS OF THE U.S. CONGRESS, SAID HE HAS BEEN GIVEN "STRONG ASSURANCES" THAT THE COMMONWEALTH COVENANT AGREEMENT, SIGNED BY AMBASSADOR FRANKLIN HAYDN WILLIAMS ON BEHALF OF THE U.S. AND MARIANAS REPRESENTATIVES LAST MONTH, WILL NOT BE APPROVED BY THE U.S. CONGRESS IN ITS PRESENT FORM.

THE MARIANAS CONGRESSMAN SAID THERE WERE INDICATIONS THAT THE \$1.5 MILLION REQUEST FOR TRANSITION FUNDS WOULD BE APPROVED AS PART OF THE ANNUAL TRUST TERRITORY GRANT FROM THE U.S. CONGRESS BUT HE ADDED: "THE COVENANT AGREEMENT WILL DEFINITELY HAVE TO BE RENEGOTIATED. ONLY A FEW MEMBERS OF THE U.S. CONGRESS KNOW ANYTHING ABOUT THE CONTENTS OF THE COVENANT. THOSE THAT DO KNOW SOMETHING ABOUT IT DO NOT SEEM TO LIKE WHAT THEY SEE."

ASKED WHICH PART OF THE COVENANT AGREEMENT SEEMED TO BE THE MOST CONTROVERSIAL, RASA SAID SEVERAL U.S. CONGRESS MEMBERS THOUGHT PROVISIONS THAT WOULD ALLOW ONLY PERSONS OF NORTHERN MARIANAS ANCESTRY TO OWN LAND WERE "RIDICULOUS."

"ANY AGREEMENT THAT WILL GIVE CERTAIN PRIVILEGES TO SOME U.S. CITIZENS AND NOT TO OTHER U.S. CITIZENS, SUCH AS LAND OWNERSHIP PROVISIONS IN THE COVENANT, WILL SIMPLY NOT BE APPROVED. THERE IS NO QUESTION ABOUT THIS," RASA DECLARED.

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POINTING TO THE FACT THAT THE \$1.5 MILLION SET ASIDE FOR THE MARIANAS TRANSITION WAS PASSED BY THE U.S. CONGRESS BY A NARROW EIGHT-VOTE MARGIN, RASA SAID, THE FACT THAT SUCH A SMALL AMOUNT OF MONEY CAUSED SO MUCH DEBATE AND DISAGREEMENT IN THE U.S. SENATE "THIS WEEK" IS EVIDENCE ENOUGH THAT LARGER REQUESTS FROM U.S. CONGRESS MIGHT FACE SERIOUS DIFFICULTIES.

"I WONDER WHAT THE U.S. CONGRESS WOULD HAVE DONE IF WE HAD BEEN ASKING FOR \$20 MILLION INSTEAD OF \$1.5 MILLION?" RASA ASKED.

REPRESENTATIVE MAFNAS, WHO REPRESENTS TINIAN IN THE CONGRESS OF MICRONESIA, SAID THAT "JUDGING FROM COMMENTS MADE IN NEWSPAPER REPORTS, THE WISHES OF THE PEOPLE OF THE MARIANAS WERE NOT EVEN CONSIDERED DURING THE DEBATE IN THE U.S. SENATE.

"I AM CONCERNED," MAFNAS SAID, "BECAUSE SOME INDIVIDUALS IN THE U.S. CONGRESS SAID THEY SHOULD 'GET ON WITH THE BUSINESS' OF ESTABLISHING A BASE ON TINIAN BECAUSE THE U.S. HAD TO LEAVE ITS BASES IN OKINAWA. IF WE ARE TO HAVE A SUCCESSFUL, BENEFICIAL AND LONG-LASTING RELATIONSHIP WITH THE UNITED STATES, THEN WE MUST DO SO AS EQUALS. OUR RELATIONSHIP MUST BE REDEFINED TO ACCOMPLISH THIS," HE ADDED.

ASKED HOW WE WOULD DESCRIBE THE RELATIONSHIP ENVISIONED IN THE PROPOSED COMMONWEALTH UNDER THE COVENANT, MAFNAS SAID: "THE COVENANT WILL GIVE THE UNITED STATES TOTAL OWNERSHIP OF THE MARIANAS, IN THE LONG RUN. IN ITS PRESENT FORM, THE COVENANT WILL GIVE THE U.S. FULL CONTROL OVER ALL THE LANDS IN THE MARIANAS. I SAY THIS BECAUSE THE U.S. WILL HAVE FULL POWER OF EMINENT DOMAIN OVER OUR LANDS, AND THE COVENANT WILL GIVE THE U.S. THE POWER TO EXERCISE EMINENT DOMAIN HERE AS THEY DO IN ANY OF THE 50 STATES," MAFNAS SAID.

CONCERNING THE EFFORTS OF U.S. SENATOR GARY HART AND OTHERS IN OPPOSING TRANSITION FUNDS FOR THE MARIANAS AT THE PRESENT TIME, BOTH RASA AND MAFNAS AGREED THE THOSE MEMBERS OF THE U.S. CONGRESS "MUST BE GIVEN THE CREDIT AND RESPECT" FOR REVEALING WHAT THAT THEY DESCRIBED AS "THE REAL UNDERLYING REASONS BEHIND RUSHING THE PROPOSED STATUS AGREEMENT."

"THE MOTIVES FOR PASSING THE TRANSITION AUTHORIZATION ARE CLEARLY MILITARY, NOT HUMANITARIAN," RASA STATED. "ALL THE MEMBERS OF THE U.S. SENATE DO AGREE ON THE POINT. THE PROBLEM IS, NOT ALL THE PEOPLE OF THE MARIANAS HAVE REALIZED THIS YET," MAFNAS CONCLUDED.

THE AUTHORIZATION BILL IS EXPECTED TO BE CONSIDERED BY THE U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES EARLY NEXT WEEK. IF THE BILL IS APPROVED, A SECOND MEASURE MUST ALSO BE APPROVED BY BOTH HOUSES TO ACTUALLY APPROPRIATE THE TRANSITION MONEY. ACCORDING TO SUPPORTERS OF THE BILL, APPROVAL OF TRANSITION FUNDS FOR THE MARIANAS DOES NOT COMMIT THE U.S. CONGRESS TO SUPPORTING THE PROPOSED COVENANT AGREEMENT.