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UNCLAS
COMTWELVE PASS INFO FOR AMB WILLIAMS
SECSTATE PASS TO DEPT INT/SEC INTINIOR/DOIA OSN
AMEMBASSY CANBERRA FOR PAC. ISL. MONTHLY
(CALL USERS: PLEASE CREDIT CONGRESS. OF MICRONESIA)
(RASA AND OLOPAI REPLY)

SAIPAN, APR. 17 (CONGRESS RELEASE)---RESPONDING TO ALLEGATIONS AND WHAT HE TERMED "PERSONAL" REFERENCES BY MARIANAS SENATOR PEDRO TENORIO, REPRESENTATIVE OSCAR CRUZ RASA SAID IN A STATEMENT THURSDAY, (APRI. 17), THAT HE WOULD NOT TAKE PART IN A "PERSONAL BATTLE" WITH THE FRESHMAN SENATOR.

RASA SAID: "THIS IS NOT A PERSONALITY CONTEST, THIS IS NOT A CONGRESSIONAL ELECTION. THIS IS AN EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM TO INFORM THE MARIANAS PEOPLE OF THE ONE AND ONLY POLITICAL STATUS ALTERNATIVE THAT IS BEING OFFERED TO THEM, WE MUST STICK TO THE ISSUES, STICK TO POLITICAL EDUCATION, AND THEREFORE I MUST REFUSE TO TAKE PART IN ANY FIGHTING THAT WILL CONFUSE THE ISSUES NOW BEFORE OUR VOTERS IN THE MARIANAS."

RASA DID SAY, HOWEVER, THAT THE TEN THOUSAND DOLLARS OF UNITY FUNDS GIVEN TO THE MARIANAS BY THE CONGRESS OF MICRONESIA, WAS, IN SENATOR TENORIO'S OWN WORDS WAS "...A HANDFUL OF DOLLARS."

"WHY," ASKED RASA, "IS ANYONE UPSET OVER A 'HANDFUL OF DOLLARS?' I HAVE BEEN INFORMED THAT THE UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT IS PROVIDING \$50,000 FOR SIMILAR ACTIVITIES BY THE MARIANAS STATUS COMMISSION. WHAT I AM SAYING," EXPLAINED RASA, "IS THAT THOSE WHO FAVOR THE PRESENT COVENANT HAVE A FIVE-TO-ONE OR HUNDRED TO ONE FINANCIAL ADVANTAGE WHEN IT COMES TO POLITICAL EDUCATION. I SAY, LET'S STICK TO THE ISSUES AND EDUCATE OUR PEOPLE," RASA SAID. HE ADDED, "THE WHOLE U.S. GOVERNMENT IS BEHIND THEM - ONLY FEW PEOPLE ARE BEHIND US. WE ARE THE UNDERDOGS, BUT WE WILL KEEP TRYING," RASA SAID.

RECALLING THAT THESE PERSONAL ISSUES WERE MADE PUBLIC FIRST BY TENORIO, HE NOTED THAT NO ONE IS MAD AT PETE TENORIO PERSONALLY, BUT THAT THEY DIFFER GREATLY ON THEIR VIEWS OF THE COVENANT. IT IS UNFORTUNATE THAT PRESENT CIRCUMSTANCES MAY BE THE FOCAL POINT OF COMMENTS AGAINST THE COVENANT.

"LET ME MAKE IT CLEAR THAT WE ARE NOT TAKING AN ALL-NEGATIVE APPROACH. WE ARE FOR A COMMONWEALTH. AND WE ARE AGAINST THIS COVENANT, ONLY INSOFAR AS WE ARE FOR A BETTER, RENEGOTIATED, COVENANT WHICH WILL GIVE BETTER GUARANTEES AND PROTECTION UNDER A COMMONWEALTH TO ALL OF OUR PEOPLE, INCLUDING ME AND MY FAMILY, AS WELL AS SENATOR TENORIO AND HIS FAMILY. "AND MAY I REMIND SENATOR TENORIO," SAID RASA, "THAT...CONGRESSMAN BURTON'S ANNOUNCEMENT YESTERDAY ABOUT TT WAR CLAIMS PROVES CHANGES CAN BE MADE. THEREFORE, MY POLICY IN THE FUTURE WILL BE TO AVOID LETTING PERSONALITIES GET IN THE WAY OF LARGER ISSUES, IN ORDER TO HELP OUR PEOPLE MAKE A MORE INFORMED CHOICE BY THE TIME OF THE PLEBISCITE ON JUNE 17. IT IS OUR HOPE THAT HISTORY WILL RECORD THAT WE WERE ABLE TO PERSUADE MANY PEOPLE INCLUDING THE GOOD SENATOR HIMSELF, THAT BY VOTING "NO" IN JUNE, THEY WILL BE VOTING FOR A BETTER DRAFT OF THE COVENANT LATER, AND CONSEQUENTLY A BETTER FUTURE FOR OUR CHILDREN AND THEIR TEACHERS, NOT JUST FOR THE NEXT FIVE YEARS, BUT AFTER TERMINATION OF THE TRUSTEESHIP 03-022318

AGREEMENT AS WELL.

LABEL OLOPAI, ANSWERING CHARGES MADE EARLIER THIS WEEK BY SENATOR TENORIO ALONG AT THE UNITED CAROLINIAN ASSOCIATION, ALSO RELEASED A STATEMENT THURSDAY, (APR. 17), AGAIN CLARIFYING THE UCA'S POSITION ON PROVISIONS IN THE COMMONWEALTH COVENANT REGARDING LAND OWNERSHIP IN THE MARIANAS AFTER TERMINATION OF THE TRUSTESHIP AGREEMENT.

RE-EMPHASIZING THAT LAND OWNERSHIP WILL BE RESTRICTED TO PERSONS OF "MARIANAS DESCENT," OLOPAI SAID: "LEGAL OPINIONS DISAGREE CONCERNING WHETHER OR NOT CAROLINIANS WILL BE PERMITTED TO OWN LAND, SINCE WE ARE DESCENDANTS OF CAROLINE ISLANDERS, AS OUR NAME IMPLIES," SAID OLOPAI.

"WE ARE NOT OCCUPIED IN THE MARIANAS STATUS COMMISSION SAYS CAROLINIANS WILL BE EXCLUDED UNDER THIS PROVISION," SAID OLOPAI. "OUR ONLY CONCERN IS WHETHER THE WORDS 'CAROLINIANS INCLUDED' ARE CLEARLY STULLED OUT IN WRITING IN THE COVENANT, IN BLACK-AND-WHITE LETTERS, SO THAT IF CHALLENGES ARE EVER MADE IN A FEDERAL COURT, THERE WILL BE NO DOUBT IN THE MIND OF ANY FEDERAL COURT JUDGE CONCERNING WHO IS EXCLUDED AND WHO IS NOT INCLUDED IN THE COVENANT AGREEMENT. IN OTHER WORDS, AS LONG AS THESE WORDS ARE NOT WRITTEN IN THE COVENANT, THERE WILL BE NO WRITTEN GUARANTEES FOR CAROLINIANS. WE MUST HAVE WRITTEN GUARANTEES," OLOPAI EMPHASIZED.

REGARDING STATEMENTS BY TENORIO THAT HE DOES NOT OWE CAROLINIANS "ANY FAVORS" FOR THEIR SUPPORT IN THE LAST ELECTION OLOPAI SAID THE UNITED CAROLINIAN ASSOCIATION BELIEVES CERTAIN PUBLIC OFFICIALS HAVE "FED THE MARIANAS AND CAROLINIAN PEOPLE A STEADY DIET OF FALSE STATEMENTS, UNTRUTHS, AND DISTORTIONS FOR TOO LONG."

EVIDENCE OF THIS, SAID OLOPAI, IS CLEARLY CONTAINED IN THE MOST RECENT ISSUE OF THE SO-CALLED "COVENANT NEWSLETTER," PUBLISHED BY THE MARIANAS STATUS COMMISSION, WHICH IS CO-EDITED BY SENATOR TENORIO. OLOPAI SAID STATEMENTS IN THE COVENANT NEWSLETTER TRANSLATED FROM ENGLISH TO CHAMORRO HAVE EXACT OPPOSITE MEANING, AS IN SECTION 103 WHICH STATES THAT THE U.S. CONGRESS WILL BE ABLE TO MAKE LAWS FOR THE MARIANAS, UNDER COMMONWEALTH. "HOWEVER," SAID OLOPAI, "THE CHAMORRO TRANSLATION SAYS THE U.S. CANNOT MAKE LAWS FOR THE MARIANAS.

"HOWEVER, I WOULD LIKE TO BELIEVE THIS WAS AN HONEST ERROR WHICH WILL BE CORRECTED IN THE NEXT ISSUE OF THE NEWSLETTER," OLOPAI ADDED.

OLOPAI ALSO SAID IN HIS STATEMENT THAT FOR THE EDITORS OF THE NEWSLETTER TO PLACE THEIR OWN PICTURE WITH PRESIDENT FORD ON THE COVER, AND THEN TO WRITE ARTICLES AND PERSONAL ATTACKS THROUGHOUT THE REST OF THE NEWSLETTER, "...IS AN INSULT TO THE DIGNITY OF THE OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES," AND BRINGS THE DIGNITY OF THE MARIANAS STATUS COMMISSION TO AN ALL-TIME-LOW IN THE EYES OF MARIANAS VOTERS."

OLOPAI ALSO QUESTIONED SENATOR TENORIO'S AUTHORITY IN SAYING THAT THE "MAJORITY OF THE MARIANAS PEOPLE DO NOT ENDORSE FREE ASSOCIATION" AS AN ALTERNATIVE STATUS FOR THE MARIANAS.

"JUDGING FROM THE LOW ATTENDANCE IN MARIANAS STATUS COMMISSION'S VILLAGE-TO-VILLAGE MEETINGS," SAID OLOPAI, "TENORIO CAN ONLY SPEAK FOR THE HANDFUL OF VOTERS THAT HAVE ATTENDED THOSE MEETINGS."

OLOPAI SAID MEETINGS IN SEVERAL VILLAGES HAVE BEEN CANCELLED DUE TO LACK OF PUBLIC INTEREST IN THE MARIANAS STATUS COMMISSION'S ACTIVITIES.

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