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Status Liaison Office
Office of the High Commissioner
Saipan, Mariana Islands 96950
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Far Eastern Economic Review
406-410 Marina House
Post Office Box 160
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Sir:

In his recent article "America's island of dreams" (FEER May 23, 1975), Roger Gale makes much of the role of Tinian in United States defense planning and states, on the basis of outdated reports, that the U.S. Government intends to construct a major base on the island which would cost "more than \$300 million" and be able to house "up to 13,000 troops and an undisclosed number of alien labourers." The fact is that there are no present plans for base construction or permanent troop stationing on Tinian, and this was made known last December. An agreement has been reached with the representatives of the Northern Mariana Islands which, if approved, will grant the United States the right to lease certain lands, primarily the northern two-thirds of Tinian, for military use. If the lands are leased as planned, some of the island will be used for defense purposes such as amphibious training exercises; but a significant portion of the leased land will be leased back to the Government of the Northern Mariana Islands for one dollar per acre per year, subject to a possible decision to construct a major facility at some future date.

I would also like to draw your attention to the fact that the United States does not "own" 90 percent of the Northern Marianas, as Mr. Gale asserts. He appears to be referring to land which is held by the Government of the Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands. This public land consists primarily of land acquired by the Japanese during their administration of the area under a League of Nations mandate. It is the policy of the United States Government to return public land to the Micronesians and this is being accomplished through their elected district legislatures.

Sincerely yours,

David Schiele

David L. Schiele
Deputy Liaison Officer for
Micronesian Status Negotiations

cc: OMSA

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