

DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE
STATEMENT ON THE MARIANAS COVENANT

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Strategic Importance of the Northern Marianas. In terms of United States security interests, the strategic importance of the Northern Marianas stems primarily from its geographic location relative to East Asia, the Pacific Basin, and the Territory of Guam.

Along with Guam, the Northern Marianas are located on the threshold of Asia, where our traditional bedrock interest has been to prevent any potentially hostile power or combination of powers from dominating the area. Since the turn of the century, the United States has given expression to this interest by several different and changing objectives, depending upon our national assessment of the overall situation. These objectives have included an open door policy for trade and commercial relations, the territorial integrity of China, the roll-back of Japanese conquests during World War II, the containment of a Sino-Soviet threat in its aftermath, and the regional balance of power we are seeking to maintain today.

Politically, economically, and militarily, it is in our national interest to be capable of maintaining the current balance among the United States, the Soviet Union, Japan, and the Peoples Republic of China in the Pacific, as well as to be able to uphold ~~our~~ commitments to our allies in the area. To do this requires a credible military presence, particularly in the military sense--to demonstrate our resolve, to add substance to our political endeavors, to protect our economic interests, and to deter major conflict. Our ability to deny the Northern Marianas to the military of other nations, coupled with the right to operate and

base U.S. forces in the area, will be important to such a posture in the years ahead. The land that we will lease in the Northern Marianas will enable us to sustain our military preparedness, ^{during peacetime} to logistically support our armed forces from U.S. soil, if necessary, ^{during contingencies} and to provide a hedge against base reductions ^{or force withdrawals} elsewhere in the East Asia and Pacific Region.

The Marianas and other islands in the Pacific Basin also are extremely important to our maritime posture. Essential United States trade routes criss-cross through the area to seaports in Japan, Taiwan, the Philippines, Indonesia, and the Continent of Asia. The Marianas, along with Palau, also lie very close to north-south shipping lanes, linking Japan and Korea to oil resources of the Persian Gulf, via the Lombok Straits, and to the mineral resources of Indonesia, Australia, and the South Pacific Islands. Major international air routes, both east-west and north-south, ~~also~~ lead to the Marianas, because of its central location relative to other countries in the East Asia and Pacific Region.

Not all of the Marianas Islands have good airports, harbors, and petroleum storage facilities, but those that do greatly enhance the capability of smaller ships and aircraft to pass through or patrol the area. Some islands are important as anchorages where surface combatants or submarines can rendezvous with underway replenishment forces, conduct minor repairs, or simply remain in the vicinity without constant steaming. Access to these islands greatly improves the

capability of a maritime power to deploy small surface combatants to ~~this~~ distant areas, without reliance on a long train of logistic support ships. While no such threat now exists, it is entirely feasible for a foreign power to establish a foothold in the area which could be used to interdict the commerce of the United States, to deprive our allies of essential raw materials, or to endanger the resupply of ~~mutual~~ ^{Security} ~~our armed~~ ^{such areas as} forces in Korea, Japan, and the Philippines. For these reasons, we believe that it is of utmost importance for the Northern Marianas and, indeed, the whole of Micronesia to be denied to other nations in the future, as it is now under the United Nations Trusteeship Agreement.

Guam and the Northern Marianas. No matter what ~~form~~ our national ~~objectives, strategy~~ and commitments may ~~take~~ ^{be} in the ~~distant~~ ^{long-range,} ~~area,~~ Guam and the Northern Marianas will continue to be important to our defense posture in the East Asia and Pacific Region.

The Department of Defense already has a strong interest in Guam, because of the military installations we have maintained there for three-quarters of a century and because of the warm support we receive from the civilian community. Today, Guam has a fine seaport, capable of handling large container ships, and an international airport which serves as a central point for the handling of air cargo, mail, and passengers

destined for Guam itself or for other countries in the West Asia and Pacific Region. Currently, the harbor and the airport are used jointly by the Department of Defense and the Government of Guam, under arrangements which provide for some growth in commercial and military activity, but not as much as each may require in ~~future years~~ ^{the distant future}. Also, the present ownership of land on Guam is becoming rather difficult to change, in the interest of either military or economic development.

Federal Government land holdings on Guam, used primarily to meet national defense requirements, are becoming more and more encumbered by technical criteria related to the reliability of communications, the safety of ammunition and petroleum storage areas, and the environmental impact of air operations. Territorial Government holdings are related directly to the limits of public indebtedness and, therefore, the capability of the Government of Guam to support existing and future public ~~development~~ programs. Private holdings have skyrocketed in price, primarily because of opportunities open for foreign investment in such industries as tourism and outdoor recreation. Recently, land alienation, in the form of transfers to either the Federal Government or foreign investors, has become a matter of local concern.

Given the land situation on Guam--a reflection of the island's political, military, and economic development during the last three decades--the Department of Defense believes that the Northern Marianas would be the next-best place to satisfy those training, operational, and logistic support requirements which tend to be land-intensive in nature.

With approval of the Covenant, the indefinite political status of the Northern Marianas will be resolved under conditions satisfactory to both the United States Government and the future Government of the Northern Marianas. Land is available on Saipan, ^{and} Tinian ~~and Saipan~~ to meet the long-term requirements of both civilian and military communities, and the ^{civilian community has} ~~people of the Northern Marianas~~ ^{its} ~~have~~ indicated ~~their~~ willingness to lease land to the Department of Defense on a long-term basis.

Joint Service Land Requirements. In addition to our long-range interest in base options, the Department of Defense faces some ~~rather~~ immediate requirements which cannot be satisfied by land acquisitions elsewhere in the East Asia and Pacific Region. In general, these requirements fall into three categories:

(1) Training and Readiness. With the end of hostilities in Indochina, it has become more rather than less important to provide opportunities for joint services exercises, including amphibious operations, ship-to-shore bombardment, and weapons delivery by tactical air units. This sort of training, which is essential to our combat readiness during peacetime, was difficult to schedule for deployed units, even before the Vietnam conflict. Because of population growth, urban expansion, and other environmental factors, it is even more difficult today. Hence, we have turned to the Marianas where we currently use Tinian for small-scale

amphibious exercises and the island of Farallon De Medinilla for ship-to-shore bombardment. Because the latter island is completely uninhabited, it also shows great promise as a target for air-to-ground weapons delivery.

(2) Facility Realignment. There is no immediate intention or authorization to undertake a military construction program on the Island of Tinian. However, our facility planners are faced constantly with the problem of how to protect the operational capability of ~~each~~ ^{other} installation^s and, at the same time, protect the local residents' safety, health, and welfare. These problems stem from such factors as the gradual deterioration of some our logistic support facilities, increasingly stringent environmental and safety criteria, and the pressures of community development, particularly around military airfields. If adjustments become necessary, as a result of such factors, the partial relocation of facilities to the Northern Marianas would be an attractive option, because there is not the pressure of urban development on and around Tinian that we find elsewhere and the long-term capital investment would be on U.S. soil.

(3) Contingency Planning. Having made the transition from a war-time to peacetime posture in the Western Pacific, we ^{also} ~~again~~ face the

problem of where to pre-position and maintain war reserve material so as to maximize our deterrent and defense capability. Tinian provides what we lack most on Guam and at many other logistic support bases in the Western Pacific--space to accommodate conventional ammunition storage facilities. Tinian also is close to our defense installations on Guam, making it possible for the two base areas to be mutually supporting. Together, Guam and Tinian would increase our preparedness to deal with a crisis in the East Asia and Pacific Region, without having to rely on a widely scattered network of logistic support bases, all located in foreign countries. This is an important option in the post-Vietnam political environment, because we cannot be absolutely sure of our access to these foreign bases in all of the contingencies which might arise.

Tinian Harbor and Airfield Rehabilitation. At present, the Tinian harbor and airfield are in the advanced stages of deterioration. It is necessary to upgrade the basic infrastructure on Tinian, in order to support our training requirements and to provide for rapid expansion in the future. Thus, the FY1976 budget includes \$1 million for the planning and design of work necessary to repair the wharf, breakwater, causeway, and runway surface. When it is necessary to initiate any construction, the United States Congress will be approached for authorization and approval of any such projects.

Conclusion. In conclusion, the Department of Defense believes, for several reasons, that the Northern Marianas Covenant is extremely important to our national defense posture:

- The land we lease will enable use to maintain and improve the peacetime training and readiness of our deployed forces and, in turn, the deterrent and defense effectiveness of these forces.

- The 17,799 acres on Tinian will enable us to solve a dilemma we face both in the continental United States and at several ~~other~~ locations in the Western Pacific: how to protect the operational capability of our installations while, at the same time, protecting the local residents' safety, health, and welfare.

- The ^{future} consolidation of some of our war reserve material on Tinian will enable us to support U.S. forces, under crisis or contingency situations, with or without concurrent access to the several logistic support bases we now maintain in foreign countries.

- Our political association with the Northern Marianas, along with the continuing denial of the use of the islands to others for military purposes, will strengthen the U.S. defense posture in the Pacific, without involving any ~~new commitments to any foreign country.~~

- The people of the Northern Marianas desire to enter into a permanent political relationship with the United States, with a full understanding of the constitutional meaning and ~~implications~~ ^{future implications} of the ~~relationship~~ "common defense."