

DEPARTMENT OF STATE

**AIRGRAM**

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SAIPAN

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TO: Department of State

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FROM: Status LNO SAIPAN

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TAGS: SREF TQ VS

SUBJECT: Possible Resettling of Vietnamese Refugees on Saipan

DATE: 11/6/75

REF: PASS INTERIOR FOR OMSN

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There is enclosed a Memorandum for the Record describing the visit to Saipan in late October of BG James A. Herbert USA Ret., senior civil coordinator for the Vietnamese refugees in Guam, and Steve Shepley from the Washington Interagency Task Force. As noted, these U.S. officials were interested in investigating the possibility of resettling several hundred Vietnamese, of traditional callings such as farmers and fishermen, in the Marianas.

Also enclosed are three press accounts of the Herbert/Shepley visit including a certain amount of editorial comment.

The Department will be informed if there are any further developments.

BERGESEN

Enclosures:

- Memorandum for Record
- PDN article 10/25/75
- Marianas Variety article 10/31/75
- Micronesia Independent 10/31/75

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CLEARANCES:

*James V. Hall*

MEMORANDUM FOR THE RECORD

10/30/75

SUBJECT: Refugee Resettlement in the Northern Marianas

On the afternoon flight from Guam on October 21st, Brig. Gen. James A. Herbert (USA Ret.), the senior civil coordinator for the Guam refugee program and Steve Shepley, representative of the Office of Special Concerns, Interagency Task Force for Indochina, Washington, arrived in Saipan after making requests to Lt. Cmdr. Bateman, Navy Liaison Officer and James V. Hall, TTPI Press Officer to meet with the leadership of the Marianas District in regard to the subject of refugee resettlement.

Shortly after their arrival, Hall escorted Shepley and Herbert to the home of Alf Bergesen, State Dept. Liaison Officer, in order for them to receive a briefing on the Marianas Covenant and other topics related to the Marianas land situation, and the political, economic and social conditions extant in the Marianas.

The following morning (Oct. 22) they arrived at the TTPI Headquarters to make a courtesy call on the High Commissioner and to explain the purpose of their visit. The appointment was made for 0900 by Lt. Cmdr. Bateman but the High Commissioner was off island and the Deputy High Commissioner was meeting with Mr. Fred Zeder, Director, Office of Territorial Affairs. Juan Sablan, TTPI Executive Officer, represented the High Commissioner and met with them in the Deputy High Commissioner's office.

Shepley and Herbert explained to Sablan the purpose of their mission, i.e., to look into the possibility of placing Vietnamese refugees with traditional occupations (farming and fishing) in the Northern Marianas. They explained that there were approximately 600-700 "principals" in refugee camps from Indiantown Gap to Camp Pendleton California who were difficult to place because their educational backgrounds and skills, their determination to pursue their traditional occupations, their determination to keep their extended families intact (some of the families had over 50 members) and their desire to be placed in a warm climate.

They also explained the process of becoming a sponsor (individual, business, community etc.) and the emoluments and other Federal support resulting from accepting refugees for resettlement. They described how all their programs are specifically tailored for the particular situation. They emphasized that any program would be fully self supporting.

Mr. Sablan thanked them for their time and told them that as an official of the TTPI he felt he could express no opinion but speaking as a Saipanese,

he thought the program had merit and should be explored. He mentioned that a recent economic survey indicated that whereas the present Saipanese work force numbers some 2,000 workers, over 6,000 would be needed in ten years. The question was where would these people come from.

Lt. Cmdr. Bateman then escorted Shepley and Herbert to the office of Frank Ada, Marianas District Administrator. Mr. Ada was less hopeful. He cited the shortage of land in the Marianas and his fear that the Vietnamese would "take-over in a hundred years."

At 1400, Herbert and Shepley met with the Marianas leadership. Those present were Danny Muna, District Legislature; Frank Diaz, District Legislature; Ben Santos, President, District Legislature; Sen. Pete Tenorio, Congress of Micronesia; Manny Sablan, MPSC; Herman Q. Guerrero, MPSC; and Eddie Pangelinan, Chairman, MPSC.

The meeting began rather coolly as word has already been spread that the group was disinclined to become involved. However, as the meeting progressed, the number of questions mounted and the cross discussion between the Marianas representatives became more animated.

Some of the problem areas discussed were the effects of the TT labor code; TT immigration policies; the particular skills of the refugees; the effect of the acceptance of the refugees upon the passage of the Covenant; what types of capital assistance would be provided e.g. an irrigation project for arable land not presently utilized because of the lack of irrigation; what items would be provided to get the refugees started and how could this be accomplished without creating resentment from the local people.

Mr. Shepley agreed to designate a liaison person to act in concert with whomever the Marianas people designated. He also agreed to provide computer print-out information on the background and skills of the refugees involved. The Marianas group decided to form a committee to investigate the political, social and economic ramifications of a decision to accept refugees and to name a contact person from that group. They also recommended that someone from Tinian, Rota, the fishing authority and the farmers cooperative be represented on any such committee.

Shepley and Herbert returned to Guam the following morning.

The attached newspaper article accurately reflects what transpired during the meeting with the Marianas leadership except that the emphasis on the number 500 was a creation of the Pacific Daily News city editor for sensationalism purposes rather than for edification.

Drafter: JVBH/Oct. 30, 1975

MICRONESIAN INDEPENDENT - October 31, 1975

**PERSPECTIVE:**

# **PAINFUL QUESTION FOR THE MARIANAS**

THE LEADERS and the people of the Marianas have suddenly found themselves on the horns of what appears to be a very thinly veiled dilemma: whether or not to act anxious about accepting a settlement of as many as 500 Vietnamese refugees.

When Marianas leaders meet to discuss their position on the "Interagency Task Force for Indochina" request to settle 500 refugees in Saipan, certain things should be kept in perspective:

For one, 500 refugees relocated in the Marianas is equivalent, approximately, to settling as many as 8 million refugees in the United States. The City of New York, which has this many people, is on the brink of financial disaster--a disaster that some observers of the American scene say could have a spin off effect on cities throughout the entire nation. The point here is not that 500 Vietnamese would have a disastrous effect on the Marianas, but that 500 Vietnamese certainly will be a significant factor in the future development of the Marianas. The 500 will in the course of time have children--accepted as American citizens born in the Marianas. As the population grows, there will be three distinct ethnic groups--the Chamorros, the Carolinians, and the Vietnamese-Americans--in the Marianas. We are not saying this is good, or this is bad, we are saying simply that Marianas must think about this.

Secondly, the leaders of the Marianas must be painfully aware of the fact that decision makers in Washington will be looking with interest at the Marianas in regard to the refugee question. Undoubtedly the argument will be advanced either for or against acceptance of the Covenant with the following breakdown:

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Case #1: The people of the Marianas say they do not wish to have Vietnamese refugees resettled in their islands. In this situation, opponents of the Covenant will say that this is an indication that all the people of the Marianas want is the benefits of becoming American citizens without the additional responsibilities.

Case #2: The people of the Marianas say they are willing to accept Vietnamese refugees resettled in their islands. Proponents of the Covenant in the U. S. Senate will in this case point to such acceptance as a very positive indication of the willingness of the Marianas citizens to carry even more than their proportional share of the problem resulting from the Vietnam war. Such agreement by the Marianas people could very well clinch acceptance by the U. S. Congress of the Covenant to form a Commonwealth of the Northern Marianas.

The only fly in the ointment, and there is one, is a recollection of the Federal government's treating of Guam. The citizens of Guam, it is said, lost more of their sons in the jungles of Vietnam than any other comparable group of people in the United States. One also hears the people of Guam complain about the lack of help and financial assistance they receive from Washington.

Guam may, or may not, be a fair comparison to make in the present situation. We are not writing with a strong mind to make a recommendation one way or the other. We are writing, however, with the intention of pointing out some of the ramifications of the refugee resettlement program proposed for the Marianas. This is a question that must be answered by the people of the Marianas themselves. It is a difficult question.

MARIANAS VARIETY NEWS AND VIEWS - October 31, 1975

# Refugees May Relocate On Saipan

SAIPAN - Two members of the Interagency Task Force for Indochina Refugees have met with a group of Marianas leaders to discuss a proposal for settling 500 Vietnamese refugees in the Marianas.

The meeting was held on Wednesday, October 23, 1975 between the U.S. members and the Marianas leaders to explore and examine the possibility of relocating the refugees on Saipan, according to MDL Congressman Daniel Muna.

Muna stated that no answer was given to the U.S. officials in this regard and the leaders are not the only ones to decide on this matter; the people of the Marianas also have to decide whether the relocation of refugees is acceptable or not, Muna stated.

According to Steve Shepley, Washington, D.C., who is representing the Task Force, there are about 3000 refugees who were tradition-oriented and wanted to remain in

their large family or village groups and continue to fish and farm.

In a June 6, 1975 issue of Marianas Variety News & Views, a prediction was made in the editorial column that the "Marianas may well be another type of a base to accommodate the awaiting refugees on Guam. However this possibly will be considered in the U.S. plans if the commonwealth is approved. It's just like the saying, "To hit two birds in one shot."

# 500 Refugees Might Settle On Saipan

By Joan King

Daily News Staff Writer

SAIPAN — A committee has been formed here to study a proposal to settle 500 Vietnamese refugee farmers and fishermen on Saipan.

At a meeting Wednesday at the Continental Hotel, Steve Shepley of Washington D.C., representing the Interagency Task Force for Indochina Refugees spoke to seven

Marianas leaders about the feasibility of a resettlement.

Shepley, in an interview after the meeting, emphasized the decision was up to the Marianas people whether they wanted to sponsor the refugees.

Stressing the meeting was an exploratory one to examine the possibility of relocating the refugees on Saipan, Shepley explained there were about 3,000 refugees who were

tradition-oriented and wanted to remain in their large family or village groups and continue to fish and farm.

The task force, which already has processed and relocated more than 110,000 refugees, has placed some of the traditional fishing groups in Texas, according to Shepley. There are about 25,000 refugees remaining to be resettled.

Since Saipan's climate and

vegetation is similar to Vietnam's, the task force decided to explore Saipan as a possibility, Shepley indicated.

He said there would be funds available from Washington to assist in the refugees' relocation. Boats, farm implements, nets and other equipment plus financial assistance for additional school and medical costs would be available to the Marianas if the Marianas people agreed to accept the refugees in the Marianas.

"Decisions on the details of the resettlement would be up to local authorities," Shepley said.

"We wouldn't be bringing in people to compete with jobs. We would be filling needs and combating inflation," stated Shepley.

"It will only work if there would be a positive contribution to the economy," he added.

While a 500 figure was mentioned at the meeting, Shepley said the exact number would be up to the people in the Marianas.

The sponsoring procedure would also have to be worked out. Normally, individuals or church groups sponsor refugee

families. In the Marianas, it would have to be decided whether individuals or groups or the Marianas government would be the sponsors, Shepley indicated.

The Marianas people must decide within a few months whether they want refugees to make their home in the Marianas.

According to Shepley, the task force wants to relocate the remaining 25,000 refugees now located in camps in Pennsylvania, Arkansas and California within nine months.

If the tradition-oriented farmer and fishermen refugees do not come to Saipan they will be relocated in Texas and Arkansas, Shepley indicated.

When questioned about possible refugee resettlement on Saipan, Marianas leaders present at the meeting stressed the discussion was "exploratory."

Vicente N. Santos, president of the Marianas District Legislature, emphasized input from the community through community meetings and from the fishing authority and Farmers Co-op would be necessary before a decision.