

Tinian People Are In A Sort Of Limbo

As thousands of airline passengers en route to Saipan fly over Tinian, most of them look down in a fascinating sight. A good portion of the island, crossed with runways, looks remarkably like a football field.

Since the fall of Saigon, nearly 1 1/2 years ago, many people have expected to see more activity on Tinian, as America's newest "fall-back" base.

But there has been little work on the little island, a mere 100 miles north of Guam. Some contractors have been eager to get at the "rebuilding" of Tinian for the past four or five years, but nothing keeps happening. The military has offered no clues as to what work will be done and when it will start, if ever.

Much of the beach land the world, Vietnam, to Thailand, to the Phillip has been lost to the U.S. military over past few years. So the Marines don't have much space left in which to put what they do. They are looking, with interest, towards the largest of Palauan islands, Babelthuap, as a possible fall-back position as well, but negotiations haven't even begun.

There are some skeptics who believe that changing defense needs may outdate the idea of a base on Tinian before work on it even gets started. To defense is geared towards missiles not a stockpile of conventional bombs amphibious landings.

Thus we wind up with two kinds of people among the islanders - those who believe that the U.S. is going to build a base on Tinian, and those who worry that any such activity is bound to have a lesser degree, an economic fallout to Guam and Saipan.

Unresolved also is the question of a large dairy ranch on Tinian, leased by Jones. Will it remain, or will the ranch be the largest in Micronesia - be forced into business for the sake of national defense?

What ever shape the Tinian base takes in the future, let us hope that the military makes up its mind soon and announce a timetable for the work to begin. The same is true for planning, have some projects approved, and are being spent. We appreciate more concrete information that the people of Tinian have been in limbo too long already. JCM.

Editorial

activity with open arms. There were some who thought half the land was ample for the military, who really wanted to take over the whole island.

Today there are fears that with the military there, Tinian's people won't be allowed to move freely and develop business interests. That fear has some basis in fact when you consider that the military keep Guam closed until 1962, and currently has made Kwajalein a closed island.

There is additional fear among the islanders that any large influx of military people will disrupt their culture, and lifestyle. This seems to be a foregone conclusion, considering the small number of people living on Tinian today.

Other fears generated by the impending military takeover is that Tinian will again become a target for missiles from possible enemy countries such as Red China or the Soviet Union. Still another worry is that the island might be used as a dump for radioactive material, or for nerve gas, and certainly for the storage of nuclear bombs and weapons.

Last year Marines from Okinawa's Third Division made their first practice assault on Tinian. But the Marines were just as much interested in public relations as they were in amphibious assaults, and spent much of their time in community projects, trying to convince the local people that it wouldn't be so bad having the military back again.

use base at a cost of more than \$300 million, to house up to 12,000 troops and large numbers of alien workers. Tinian would, according to these plans, become the "fall-back" base in the Pacific.

We suspect that a good deal of U.S. energy in Micronesia has been devoted to securing Tinian for the base. This meant the political expediency of allowing the Northern Marianas to negotiate separately with the United States, and splitting up the Trust Territory.

In that covenant, which established the Commonwealth of the Northern Marianas, the U.S. obtained rights to nearly two-thirds of Tinian, about 17,800 acres. The 100-year lease cost the U.S. \$17.5 million, or about \$9.83 per acre per year for the next century.

Also included in the 100-year land arrangement are 17.7 acres at Saipan's Tarapag Harbor at \$2 million, and the entire 206 acres of Farallon de Medinilla Island, for target practice, for \$20 million.

According to press reports the military plans for Tinian are to build a supply base, ammunition-storage depot and a Marine amphibious training site. Tinian would be an "interior position" - what military strategists call a securely American-held island territory.

There are some opposition in Tinian over the vast amount of land that needed to be acquired, but it seemed to work out in a compromise. Some of the 900 Tinianese were opposed to any military on the island, and others were ready to welcome any

North. He is ahead in the suburbs by only a narrow 44-40 percent.

By Louis Harris
Gannett News Service

gain five points among these groups, he will be in a good and McCarthy is certain.

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