



U
THE DEPUTY SECRETARY OF DEFENSE
WASHINGTON, D. C. 20301

OFFICE OF THE DEPUTY SECRETARY OF THE INTERIOR

01
2,5

DEC 26 1976

OFFICE OF THE DEPUTY
UNDER SECRETARY

OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY

DEC 29 3:04

DEPT. OF THE INTERIOR

Honorable Kent Frizzell
Under Secretary of the Interior
Washington, D. C. 20240

Dear Mr. *Kent* Frizzell:

This is in response to your letter of October 7, 1976, regarding programming funds for leasing of land on Tinian.

The Department of Defense position, with respect to the Northern Marianas (Tinian), has not changed from that reiterated by former Ambassador Williams in the "Fifth and Final Session" of the Marianas Political Status Negotiations, in February 1975 and testimony contained in the Congressional hearings on the Covenant.

The following guidelines, which were provided to Ambassador Williams in 1975 regarding our planning for the Tinian base, are still current:

-- The international situation no longer requires the early development of a multi-purpose base on Tinian.

-- Economic factors, especially the impact of serious inflation on a fixed budget, continue to impact on many DoD programs and priorities including the Tinian base plans.

-- The basic requirement to acquire approximately 17,800 acres on Tinian remains a viable defense concept. This acreage could provide an adequate training area, airfield and a storage and administration complex, all of which may be major considerations as longer range requirements evolve. However, portions of the land would be brought into use over a long-range period rather than in the near-term.

03-022664

-- After lease acquisition, lands temporarily unneeded would be made available through outgrants for civilian use. Certain facilities, when developed, could be subject to the joint use agreements worked out in the negotiations or at the time facilities become available.

-- Initially, after obtaining Congressional approval, Defense would upgrade the existing harbor and airfield, and possibly make minor related improvements. This would provide support for training exercises and the capability to expand rapidly in an emergency.

-- Defense has no plans in the near-term to construct any permanent buildings. Plans for further development of the area are being reviewed and any required construction would be conducted over a long-range period unless world conditions dictate otherwise.

The Department of Defense has not yet determined when it might exercise its option to lease the land in the Northern Marianas or to seek the prerequisite appropriations for this purpose. Once a decision is made to proceed, we would assuredly seek an appropriations for the lease of the land within the time frame set forth in the Covenant. Any plans, such as in the FY 1978-1982 time frame, will of necessity be first cleared with Congress in the form of an appropriations request.

With specific reference to the proposed park on Saipan, there appears to be some misinterpretation as to funding and eventual planning and development of it. From the minutes of our meeting with Ambassador Williams in late 1974, we recall that the Ambassador stated that these funds would not be charged to the DoD's appropriations, but would be sought elsewhere. Likewise, it was recognized that the Department of Defense had no expertise in the park area and that such a capability was resident within the Department of the Interior (National Park Service). Since we believe that there is a U.S. commitment to the park and in order to resolve this apparent impasse, we would be most pleased to meet with your representatives to develop a mutually acceptable working agreement to implement this section of the Northern Marianas Covenant.

With regard to the issuance of a DoD Press Release, we believe that our current plans for Tinian were thoroughly addressed in the Congressional hearings on the Covenant and that such a release at this time would not be advisable. We would be happy, of course, to respond to any media inquiries on this subject.

022665

I appreciate your interest in this matter and will keep you informed as events so warrant.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to be the initials 'Bl'.

Enclosure

022566