

WASHINGTON NEWS - DEC 20, 1952

## Civilian Control Mysteriously Ending

NAVY'S RETAKING 2 PACIFIC ISLES by Anthony Lewis

On Jan. 1, without fuss or fanfare, the U.S. Navy will acquire two islands in the far Pacific - Saipan and Tinian, which are now under jurisdiction of the Interior Department.

President Truman announced the change Nov. 10 in a little-publicized executive order. He gave no reason.

Navy, Interior and White House officials have refused to comment to The News on the purpose of the transfer, except to say:

"You can bet it has something to do with security."

### AIR OF MYSTERY

The air of mystery is increased by the fact that the President's executive order reverses a previous Truman Administration policy of switching steadily from military to civilian administration of territories.

Saipan and Tinian were among a large group of Pacific islands taken from Navy control at President Truman's direction only a year and a half ago — on July 1, 1951 — and put under Interior. A year earlier the President ended years of Navy jurisdiction over Guam and appointed a civilian governor.

Those earlier transfers appeared to have ended a long fight over Navy rule of the islands. Interior Department, especially the late Secretary Harold Ickes, fought hard for civilian control. In May 1946, Mr. Ickes said:

"Grotesque, inefficient, tyrannical .. such has been naval rule over subject peoples ... The record shows that the Navy cannot be trusted to rule civilian populations. The Navy is arbitrary, dictatorial and totally disregarding of civilian rights."

### A--BOMBS?

Two possible reasons for the President's decision to restore Navy rule over Saipan and Tinian have been suggested — both of them involving military security.



NARA APPROVED

8w11/06/12

The first theory is that Saipan and/or Tinian may play a part in some new atomic project or tests. There is no proof of any kind for this speculation.

The other theory is simply that the Navy wishes to expand its base in the islands and maintain a tighter check on security.

Saipan and Tinian are ideal as military bases. Unlike many other Western Pacific islands, they have ample room for building. More than 7000 military buildings of various sizes were built on the islands by the Navy immediately after World War II.

#### BEST PORT

Saipan has the best deep-water port for thousands of miles around. The islands have several air fields with long runways from which bombers took off for Japan during World War II. The atomic bomb dropped on Hiroshima was assembled in the Saipan-Tinian area.

The Japanese made Saipan one of their most important air, sea and land bases, before American forces took it in World War II.

The Navy will be getting more than air fields and harbor installations when it takes control of the two islands.

Saipan and Tinian have a combined area of 86 square miles -- about a fourth more than the District of Columbia. They lie about three miles apart, 150 miles northwest of Guam.

#### POPULATION

Saipan has a considerable population as Western Pacific islands go -- more than 5000. Tinian, smaller and rockier, has only 400-odd permanent residents.

Saipan is the most productive of any of the islands now under United States control in the Western Pacific. The natives -- known as Chamorros -- grow sugar, coffee, copra and other vegetables and fruits. Saipan even has some hardwood forests, tho they have been depleted.

American administrators have introduced ducks, geese, chickens and turkeys to the island with some success, and at last report some 800 head of cattle were feeding on Saipan's pastures.

Saipan also has more industry than any of its neighbors. There are several small sawmills, a coffee processing plant, shoemakers, tailors, blacksmiths and machinists. During the war the island was



generally considered about as good a billet as was available anywhere.

#### UN TRUSTEESHIP

Saipan and Tinian were among the dozens of former Japanese islands placed under United Nations trusteeship after the war and entrusted to American administration. The Navy carried out the mandate until the Trust Territory was placed under an Interior Department High Commissioner, former Sen. Elbert Thomas of Utah, in 1951.

Interior tried to make Saipan self-sufficient economically and in fact hoped to supply Guam with Saipan-grown fruits and vegetables. In one and one-half years the department reduced from 275 to 160 the number of Americans employed as administrators on the two islands.

The long-term objective was genuine self-government. But despite existence of some native councils, Interior felt that it would be many years before the residents of Saipan and Tinian would be able to stand on their own.

#### NO IMMEDIATE CHANGES

As of the moment, the Navy plans to make no changes in Interior's plans for Saipan and Tinian. A Pentagon officer told The News that civilian officials would be kept on the job. Instead of working for High Commissioner Thomas, they will report to Rear Admiral Ernest W. Litch, Commander Marianas, with headquarters in Guam.

Interior officials seem to be taking the loss of their two islands philosophically. They say they still do not know how or why the idea for the transfer originated. When they found about it last summer, they protested to President Truman -- but in vain.

One Interior spokesman told The News he thought the Navy could probably do a good job on the islands. But he said the department regretted the change because Interior favors the principle of civilian control.

E N D  
\* \* \* \* \*



NAVY TO TAKE OVER SAIPAN AND TINIAN

Ex-Sen. Thomas Giving Up Trust Territory Post

WASHINGTON, Dec. 1 (AP). Former Sen. Elbert D. Thomas, High Commissioner of the Trust Territory of the Pacific, said he received instructions today from President Truman for turning over Saipan and Tinian to Navy control.

He also disclosed to reporters that he plans to submit his formal resignation from his post after the turnover has been completed. By custom ambassadors, and others in like station such as Mr. Thomas, will turn in resignations to clear the way for President-elect Eisenhower to make his own appointments. Mr. Thomas said he had no plans at the moment.

The former Democratic Senator from Utah called on the President along with Horace Marshall, Attorney General of the Trust Territory.

The executive order giving the Navy control of two islands makes Jan. 1 the effective date.

E N D

\* \* \* \* \*



NARA APPROVED

Sw 11/06/12

BAITIMORE SUN - DEC 13, 1952

SECRET U.S. WORK AT SAIPAN HINTED

Two Former Japanese Islands Returned to Navy Rule

HONOLULU, Dec. 12 (AP). A reliable nonmilitary source said today that the recent return of Saipan and Tinian, former Japanese islands in the western Pacific, from civilian to Navy administration was made because the Navy wanted the area for "secret purposes."

Eventually, he said, all the northern Mariana Islands would be returned to Navy administration because of difficulties in administering the divided area.

The source, who is in close touch with the situation but asked not to be quoted by name, said he did not know the nature of the secret work. He added, however, that the first atomic bomb dropped on Japan in World War II was assembled in the Saipan-Tinian area.

ABOLITION NOT EXPECTED

He said he did not think this was the first step in the abolition of the United States trust territories, presently headed by High Commissioner Elbert Thomas.

Thomas, with headquarters in Honolulu, administers civil government in the Marianas, Caroline and Marshall Islands. He is now in Washington, where there has been speculation that the trust territory setup would be abolished.

The trust territories took over administration of the former Japanese island from the United States Navy in 1951.

The source said that Guamanians were concerned about the Navy regaining control of the Marianas.

E N D

\* \* \* \* \*



NARA APPROVED

8w11/06/12

NEW YORK TIMES - DEC 2, 1952

NAVY TO CONTROL SAIPAN

Also Takes Over Tinian, Nearby, Pacific Islands, Jan. 1

WASHINGTON, Dec. 1 (AP). Former United States Senator Elbert D. Thomas, High Commissioner of the Trust Territory of the Pacific, said he received instructions today from President Truman for turning over Saipan and Tinian to Navy control. The United States administers the islands under United Nations trusteeship.

He also disclosed to reporters that he plans to submit his formal resignation from his post after the new administration takes office.

The former Democratic senator from Utah called on the President along with Horace Marshall, the Attorney General of the Trust Territory.

The executive order giving the Navy control of two islands makes Jan. 1 the effective date.

Senator Thomas said he had not opposed the order and that the explanation was that the territory would be more effectively operated by the Navy.

E N D

\* \* \* \* \*



NARA A

Sh