

HEADQUARTERS OF THE COMMANDER NAVAL FORCES
NAVAL FORCES MARSHALLS-CAROLINES AND MARSHALS

DECLASSIFIED

Authority E.O. 12958

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Serial: 0090

SECRET

9 JUL 1949

FIRST ENDORSEMENT on
DepHiComFerPacIs ltr
Ser 006 of 8 June 1949.

From: Commander Naval Forces Marianas.
To: Commander in Chief Pacific Fleet.
Via: (1) High Commissioner Trust Territory of the Pacific Island.

Subject: Pagan Island - Change in Status of, request for.

References: (f) DepHiComFerPacIs conf ltr serial 011 dtd 21 April 1948.
(g) ComMarianas First End on ref (f) serial 0127 dtd 23 April 1948.
(h) CinCPacFlt conf ltr serial 0386 dtd 10 May 1948.
(i) ComPhibPac conf ltr serial 0229 dtd 28 May 1948.
(j) CinCPacFlt rest ltr serial 533 dtd 3 January 1948.
(k) CinCPacFlt rest spdltr serial 1303 dtd 25 April 1949.

1. Reference (f) originated by the Deputy High Commissioner of the Trust Territories about a year ago, submitted a request to settle natives on PAGAN Island, similar to the request contained in the basic correspondence. Reference (g) contains Commander Naval Forces Marianas recommendation that PAGAN Island be reserved as a training area, and that natives not be permitted to colonize the island. The results of the survey to locate other suitable training areas in the Western Pacific, referred to in reference (j), have indicated that PAGAN Island is the most suitable island for amphibious and shore bombardment gunnery training in the area. One of the primary reasons for this conclusion is that PAGAN is uninhabited.

2. The Commander in Chief Pacific Fleet concurred with Commander Naval Forces Marianas recommendations in reference (h) and submitted the correspondence to the Commanding General Fleet Marine Force Pacific and Commander Amphibious Forces Pacific Fleet for such recommendations or comments as they considered pertinent. Reference (i) is Commander Amphibious Forces Pacific Fleet reply in which he summarized the background of PAGAN Island and its characteristics as a training area. He concurred with the recommendations of references (g) and (h), that there should be no change in the status of PAGAN until an alternate training area could be established. On 25 April 1949, in reference (k), to the Commandant Marine Corps, the Commander in Chief Pacific Fleet stated that the status of Pagan Island as a training area, reserved for use of elements of the Pacific Fleet, would remain unchanged.

3. Permanent facilities are presently under construction for the Fleet Marine Force, Guam indicating that the Chief of Naval Operations intends to maintain, in the foreseeable future, combatant marine units in the Marianas. Pagan, at present, is the only place meeting the requirements necessary to maintain these forces at the required standard of proficiency. Further it is the only area of this type west of the Hawaiian Islands.

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THE PACIFIC COMMAND
AND UNITED STATES PACIFIC FL

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HEADQUARTERS OF THE COMMANDER NAVAL FORCES MARIANAS
NAVAL FORCES MARSHALLS-CAROLINES AND MARSHALLS-CAROLINES AREA**SECRET**FIRST ENDORSEMENT on
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4. Because of the relatively small area involved, 18.7 square miles, little more than one half the size of ROTA, 32.9 square miles, there would be no safe place to concentrate natives during naval gunfire or aircraft bombing exercises without greatly limiting the scope of the practice. If the natives were to be evacuated prior to the conduct of the exercise, the cost, time involved and general shortage of transportation would add greatly to the difficulties of conducting training exercises. It is recognized that, at present, a relatively easy income is available in the harvesting of existing Japanese coconut plantations. Parties of natives are permitted to harvest these crops when the range is not in use. In view of the small size of the island, the declining price of copra and high shipping costs, (that can not be expected to appreciably decrease), it is considered that military requirements are paramount to possible advantages that might accrue through native settlement of the island. As the Civil Administration of the Trust Territories is to be transferred to the Department of the Interior, the colonization of PAGAN Island by natives would possibly preclude the retention of operational control, by the armed services of the only suitable training area in the Western Pacific.

5. In view of the above, Commander Naval Forces Marianas recommends that the Deputy High Commissioner's request to settle Chamorros on PAGAN Island be denied and that PAGAN Island be retained as a training area for the armed services. If certain Chamorro clans can establish a valid claim to PAGAN Island, in whole or in part, it is recommended that the Navy purchase or lease the island so that the availability of the only adequate gunfire and amphibious training facility in the area may be safe guarded.

cc: DepHiComTerPacIs.