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A Step Backward

President Truman's Order No. 10408 transferring civil jurisdiction over Saipan and Tinian from the Interior Department to the Navy Department on January 1, 1953 was unnecessary and will create a messy situation for the United States in the Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands and in the United Nations. The transfer was unnecessary, even assuming that classified activities are being conducted or planned on Saipan and Tinian, because:

1. The Navy, by agreement with Interior, has maintained control over the entry of persons, vessels and planes to Saipan and Tinian as well as to all other islands in the Trust Territory.

2. The Interior Department has agreed to make available all the land needed for military use on these and other Trust Territory islands.

3. No security demands have been made by the Navy or any other agency which have not been met and there have been no suggestions from military agencies that the manner in which civil jurisdiction was being exercised could be improved from a security standpoint.

4. The only additional step which could have been taken to give the Navy as much security control in these islands as exists over the most highly classified military installations anywhere under the American flag, was for the President to close the islands or the



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parts used for classified purposes, in accordance with Article 13 of the trusteeship agreement with the UN. The Visiting Mission of the United Nations Trusteeship Council which will visit the Territory in February, could thereby be kept out of such "closed areas" and the Trusteeship Council otherwise prevented from exercising its functions therein. Closing an area for security reasons need not interfere with the continued exercise of civil jurisdiction by the civilian government of the Territory. For example, Eniwetok Atoll, where top secret atomic experiments have been carried out, was "closed for security reasons" and, through cooperative arrangements between the Atomic Energy Commission and the Government of the Trust Territory, the latter continues to exercise civil jurisdiction in the Atoll. Saipan and Tinian have not been "closed" and the right of the UN, including its visiting missions, to exercise its functions in these islands still exists. Thus, nothing has been gained from a security standpoint by placing these islands back under Naval Government.

5. Civilian administration has done an effective job in the Trust Territory. Public services have been carried out by more highly qualified personnel under Interior administration and at a cost to the Federal Government of \$1,500,000 less annually than the Navy. Agricultural production and marketing have improved so much in Saipan and Tinian since Interior took over that for the first time since the war these islands have a favorable balance of trade. The Saipan District was in fact one of the best administered of the six Trust Territory Districts and it is therefore unlikely that the Order

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was issued in order to better care for the needs of the islanders.

This transfer not only was unnecessary but also will have these harmful effects:

1. A messy and costly situation in the Trust Territory will be created with the establishment of two separate governments in the Territory, each with its own laws, policies and government machinery. The Navy will replace many of the expert civilian personnel with Naval officers and enlisted men and maintain a government separate from that of the rest of the area.

2. Saipan and Tinian have the greatest agricultural potential of any of the Trust Territory islands and should be used for settlement of young people from over populated islands. They are also the sites of an income asylum and a leprosarium for all the Trust Territory, and it is the Navy's desire that Interior seek funds to build new facilities elsewhere. The people of Saipan and Tinian are among the most highly advanced of all the people of the Trust Territory. Splitting them and their islands away from the rest of the Territory will thwart the political and economic advancement of the Territory as a whole.

3. Saipan and Tinian, having a combined population of 5,500, are only two of a chain of 21 islands forming the Northern Mariana District whose people, numbering 6,500 are closely related politically, socially, and economically. Separating these islands governmentally would be most unfortunate. A new order has been prepared to place all the Northern Marianas, including Saipan and Tinian, under Navy

jurisdiction. This new order affords the President an opportunity to review the entire situation again and if he finds, as we think he will, that the original order was unwise, it is hoped that he will revoke it rather than extend the area of Naval government to the whole of the Northern Mariana District.

3. The United States will be subject to severe criticism in the United Nations Trusteeship Council for creating two governments in the Trust Territory. And since the Council only recently commended the United States for transferring the area to civilian administration, questions may be raised on the return of part of the area to Naval government. Now that colonial issues in North Africa and South East Asia are being hotly debated in the UN, the United States can ill afford to get itself on the same rack as the European colonial powers.

4. The transfer renews the Navy's hopes of regaining governmental power throughout the Pacific Islands and may renew the controversy over whether the well established American principle of civilian as against military control of governmental affairs should continue to apply in the Pacific. It is ironical that in the closing days of his administration President Truman should leave this blemish on an otherwise laudable record of establishing civilian administration throughout the Pacific Island area.

The threat to civilian government in the Pacific will exist so long as admirals who occupy the positions of Commander-in-Chief of the Pacific Fleet (now Admiral Radford) and of Commander of Naval Forces in the Marianas (now Admiral Litch) fight the idea of civilian government with all the power at their command. The military, as in Alaska, have traditionally aided in the development of United States territories, but they haven't done so in the Pacific. On the contrary, they have not only refused to cooperate with the civil governments but also used their authority to stifle rational development of public services and economic programs. For example: (1) They have refused to permit a Trust Territory plane (whose crew and passengers are cleared in advance by the Navy to land once weekly on the naval airstrip at Kwajalein -- despite warning from Trans-Ocean Airlines which operates the Trust Territory air service that continued landing in the lagoon just outside the airstrip is hazardous to the government planes and the lives of those aboard; (2) They have refused permission for any foreign merchant vessel to enter Guam or the Trust Territory despite the fact that several foreign vessels entered both territories when they were under the Navy's jurisdiction; and (4) refused to assure the civilian community of Guam that it would provide electric power to meet its expanding needs, despite an offer by the Government of Guam to pay for plant expansion costs and an agreement between Interior and Navy that the Navy would provide power on a reimbursable basis for civilian use and expand its plant

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facilities as necessary to provide for increased civilian needs if the cost of expansion were met by the territorial government.

President Truman has stood firm in his support of civilian government, and its effective establishment in Guam, American Samoa and the Trust Territory is a tribute to his administration. He can avoid a messy situation in the Trust Territory and in the United Nations for the new administration and safeguard the principle of civilian government by revoking Executive Order 10408 in lieu of further extending Naval jurisdiction to the rest of the Marianas. Otherwise, the President-Elect should have this Order reviewed as soon as possible after the inauguration.