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Navy to Shift Rule Of Pacific Islands To Interior Dept.

The United States Navy, which has been spending seven million dollars or more a year administering Pacific islands, is closing out its 50-year-old island government business. Civilians from the Interior department will take over. On July 1, the Navy will turn over its 50-year control of Guam, big Pacific naval bastion, to Gov. Carlton Skinner, who will take charge of the island for the Interior department. The Navy will continue to operate its vast naval base on Guam and the Air Force will keep its big bomber air bases on the island.

Samoa Rule to Shift

A year later, the Navy will also step out as governor of American Samoa, which it has ruled for 50 years. And at that time the Navy will also turn over to the Interior department the administration of the Pacific islands trust territory taken from Japan during World War II.

This trust territory includes the Marshall, Caroline, and Marianas islands—a total of 86 large islands and some 1,900 smaller islands stretching across the Pacific with a total population of 68,000 natives. The United States hold these islands in trust for the United Nations.

Navy officials said the seven million dollars that the Navy has

been spending annually in the Pacific islands, not including Guam and American Samoa, will be diverted to other military uses when the Interior department takes over.

Islanders Live on Native Foods

Navy island government officials said the islanders are able to get enough food by fishing and by gathering native foods like taro, coconut, breadfruit and arrowroot. Except for the trade in copra (dried coconut meat), the natives have been unable to develop any commercial enterprises like fishing.

A recent Navy report said the islands are slowly recovering from the war. Coconut trees are being replanted and will raise copra production in a few years to the pre-war level of 15,000 tons a year, it said. Small shops and small industries also are being revived in some of the larger islands.

The Navy said it does not intend to maintain any military bases in the trust territory except the airfield on Kwajalein needed for military and commercial air traffic. The atomic energy commission has its atomic bomb proving ground on one of the trust islands, Eniwetok.

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