

PALAU AIRFIELD INAUGURAL FLIGHT SCHEDULED

SAIPAN, M.I. (April 15)...The first scheduled landing of the Trust Territory DC-4 aircraft on the new 6,000 foot landing field on Babelthuap Island, Palau District will be made Friday, April 16 according to High Commissioner Goding.

Mr. Goding said the opening of this new airfield is an important step in the economic advancement of Palau as it greatly increases the airlift capacity directly to Koror eliminating the inconvenience and delays involved in leaving Koror via Angaur Island.

Inaugural flight invitations were extended by the High Commissioner to ranking civilian and military officials in Guam and the Trust Territory. Plans call for the DC-4 to leave Guam on its normally scheduled Yap-Palau flight at 7 am Friday. The plane will touch down at Yap, discharge passengers and then continue on to Palau. It is expected that an aerial guided tour of the Palau Islands will be provided by the High Commissioner before landing on the new Babelthuap (Bowh'-Bull Daub) Island airstrip.

Added plans include a brief motor tour of the central administrative center of Koror before the guests reboard the DC-4 for the return flight to Yap and Guam.

Construction activities on the Palau airfield began in earnest two years ago. Trust Territory forces, almost entirely Palauan, using all available equipment, completed the job. The airfield is 6,000 feet in length with a 150 foot wide runway of compacted coral. An estimated 700,000 cubic yards of material were moved in cutting, filling and surfacing of the airfield. Additional roads were opened and rehabilitated

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to link the airfield with the District Center $6\frac{1}{2}$ miles away.

The project was carried out for the major period under Construction Superintendent Clyde Wertz. He was succeeded by James Bandy. Final completion was carried out under the direction of Mr. Robert Gifford, Palau District Public Works Officer.

The opening of the road to the airfield last year brought ever increasing numbers of people from the District Center of Koror to Babelthuap Island on week-ends. The intervening stretch of water between Koror and Babelthuap is now being transitted by a ferry which is carrying more passengers and vehicles every month.

An important side development of the airfield project has been the start of a primary road which will ultimately stretch the entire 27 mile length of Babelthuap Island which is the largest single land mass in the Trust Territory. Villagers, once forced to rely solely on water transportation to the District Center, will soon be traveling across village connected secondary roads leading to the island-spanning primary road.

Veteran pilots who fly Trust Territory aircraft have said that the approaches to the Palau Airfield are among the most beautiful of any they have seen throughout the world.

It is expected that the opening of the new field will provide increasing interest in Palau's visitor development program.