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REPLY VIA AIR MAIL TO

Marianas Office

October 11, 1974

The Honorable Louis Stokes  
House of Representatives  
315 Cannon House Office Building  
Washington, D. C. 20515

Dear Congressman Stokes:

The Tinian Municipal Council has engaged us to advise and represent it with respect to the present plans of the United States Military to establish a joint-military complex on Tinian. On their behalf, we have decided to inform you and several other members of the United States Congress of the current developments on Tinian. This is the purpose of this letter, plus its enclosures of a Resolution passed by the Tinian Municipal Council, a cover letter by the Speaker of the Tinian Municipal Council and various other documents and news clippings.

Tinian is an island in the Mariana Islands archipelago, immediately south of Saipan. It is part of the Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands, otherwise known as Micronesia, administered by the United States under the United Nations Charter and a 1947 Trusteeship Agreement.

During Japanese times, Tinian was inhabited only by Okinawans and Japanese people. Following World War II, the United States Government decided to return all those peoples who had, in one way or another, migrated to other islands, to their original islands. A group of these peoples were Chamorros (people from the Marianas) who had migrated to Yap Island during Japanese times. These Chamorros were returned to the Mariana Islands in the late 1940's. While a few went to other islands in the Marianas, many went to Tinian because the United States promised them that they would be given valuable fee simple estates if they resettled and farmed on Tinian.

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Relying on this promise, this group of people gave up lands that they had acquired on Yap. They went to Tinian, stayed and farmed the land under a homestead program similar to the homestead programs in the United States. That program, however, has been poorly administered from the beginning. A few received the promised titles, but most have been denied homestead deeds for entirely arbitrary reasons.

At present, there are approximately 800 people on the island of Tinian. Some of these have been issued homestead permits which were summarily revoked without due process. Some have paid the required permit fee but never received the permit. Some have been issued permits and have farmed the land for the acquired three-year period, but have never received deeds to which they are entitled under the law.

The people of Tinian, characteristic of Micronesians, are a patient group of people. They have quietly borne this injustice thinking that all will turn out as promised eventually. You can imagine the disillusionment of the people of Tinian when they discovered that they may be removed from Tinian altogether.

On May 16, 1973, an unauthorized newspaper story appeared in the Pacific Daily News, a copy of which is enclosed, which informed the public and the people of Tinian, for the very first time, the extent of the United States' plans to establish a military base on Tinian. According to the article, the Department of Defense wanted all of Tinian. The residents of Tinian would be moved off-island to be relocated later. As an alternative to this plan, the United States would propose to relocate the village the people are presently living in to another area on Tinian.

Because of the uproar over the military's first alternative, the military decided to take the other alternative - relocating the village to another area. Again, the people of Tinian learned of this decision, not by direct communication to the people, but through the news media. In a May 30, 1973 article in the Pacific Daily News, a copy of which is enclosed, the people of Tinian learned that, although the plans had not yet been officially announced, the United States proposed to take control of two-thirds of Tinian, and that the people would be relocated. That same evening, May 30, 1973, according to a

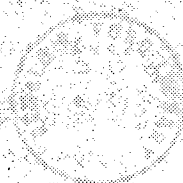
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May 31, 1973 Pacific Daily News article, Ambassador Williams, in a radio broadcast to the people of the Marianas, confirmed the May 30, 1973 news article. But it did more than confirm the previous stories. The article stated not only did the United States want the northern two-thirds of the island, but also that the United States "should also ask to acquire the southern third but would then make this part of the island available to the current residents for normal civilian activities and community life." (Pacific Daily News, May 31, 1973, front page). (See enclosed copy.) The people of Tinian were going to be allowed to lease a small portion of their own island! It should be noted that United States officials had, for the previous two weeks, flatly denied that the United States wanted the whole of Tinian.

As if it were not enough that the United States military was eventually going to drive the people of Tinian out of their homes, another move was made by the administering authority to further aggravate the people of Tinian. This time, the High Commissioner of the Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands, an American appointed by the President and directly responsible to the Secretary of Interior, unilaterally and without authority or consultation from the Congress of Micronesia, suspended the Tinian homestead program, a program which the government had really never started despite its promises. The apparent reason for the homestead moratorium was to minimize the cost and difficulty of acquiring land for the military.

On February 14, 1974, the Tinian Municipal Council passed an Ordinance providing for a referendum to determine what the people of Tinian thought about the military's land requirements. This Ordinance, unfortunately, was vetoed by the District Administrator, an appointee of the High Commissioner of the Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands, apparently out of fear that the results of the referendum would be negative.

A proclamation was circulated among the voters of Tinian on June 8, 1973. The proclamation, signed by 178 of the 348 registered voters, expressed the opposition of the people to the plans of the military. This proclamation was presented to Ambassador Williams. He refused to even read it saying that the proclamation should go to the Marianas Political Status



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Commission. This was done. However, the Marianas Political Status Commission voted that the proclamation should not be referred to Ambassador Williams. (The Marianas Political Status Commission was established in May of 1972 by the Marianas District Legislature for the purpose of negotiating with the United States as to a possible commonwealth status for the Mariana Islands. Ambassador Franklin Haydn Williams was appointed head of the United States delegation to the negotiations.) Another petition was later circulated on July 7, 1974. This one was in favor of the military's plans. What all of this shows is that the actions of the United States has only sown confusion and disruption among the people of Tinian. No one really knows or understands exactly what the military's plans include.

It is obvious that the U. S. Military's plans on Tinian are serious and substantial. It also appears that the administering authority has not, and does not intend to live up to its obligation under the Trusteeship Agreement in which it "protect the inhabitants against the loss of their lands and resources". (Art. 6(2), Trusteeship Agreement).

Admittedly, the United States is granted the power, under Article 5 of the Trusteeship Agreement (an agreement which the people of Micronesia were never a part of), "in the maintenance of international peace and security...to establish naval, military and air bases and to erect fortifications in the Trust Territory..." (Art. 5, Trusteeship Agreement.) However, nobody from the United States has clearly shown to the people of Tinian that the whole of Tinian would be needed for the maintenance of peace and security. This was not shown when the military's land requirements were changed to two-thirds. The whole plans for Tinian have been kept secret from the people of Tinian until the news leak on May 16, 1973. In fact, the military's plans would, in all probability, be secret still had it not been for the news leak. Moreover, in an article appearing in the July 7, 1974 issue of the Honolulu Advertiser, a copy of which is enclosed, Ambassador Williams was quoted as saying that the "President approved the military plan in 1971 and reaffirmed it in 1972 following a National Security Council review."

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Our client is very interested in learning the present status of the military plans for their island, what decisions and commitments have already been made by the United States executive branch agencies involved, and what steps are to be taken to protect the existing culture of the people of Tinian. Our initial attempt to get this description failed, as you can see from the enclosed October 2, 1974 news story. Our client strongly believes that any military installation occupying more than one third of the island and any acquisition of land beyond a lease for such use would be extremely and unnecessarily disruptive of the lives of the people of Tinian. The Tinian Municipal Council is unaware of any reason why the United States must establish an installation larger than one third of the island, especially in light of the extreme consequences to the people of Tinian. As the enclosed Resolution states, the people of Tinian are not opposed to use of the northern one-third of Tinian by the U. S. Military.

Your assistance in this matter would be greatly appreciated.

It would also be appreciated if any response on this matter would be addressed to this office.

Sincerely,

  
Jesus C. Borja  
Attorney

Enclosures