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By ERC NARS, Date 6-27

24 February 1945

MEMORANDUM TO: Major General L. R. Groves.

SUBJECT: The Base of Operations of the 509th Composite Group.

1. During the period from 8 February to 21 February 1945 an inspection tour of the islands of Guam and Tinian was made by Commander F. L. Ashworth, USN, during which information was gathered upon which a decision as to the ultimate operating base of the 509th Composite Group could be based. Prior to this inspection tour it had been proposed to base the Group on Guam. The AAF Headquarters in the forward area have recommended Tinian as the base. In view of the results of the tour of inspection, it has been decided that Tinian is the most desirable island on which to base the 509th Composite Group.
2. There are several disadvantages to Guam as a base. First and most fundamental is that upon the arrival of the 58th Wing the existing facilities and facilities now under construction for the operation of B-29 aircraft from Guam will be completely absorbed. An airfield from which the 509th Group could operate would not be ready until about August. There is an acute shortage of construction personnel on Guam because of the tremendous construction program now underway there. Shipping to and from Guam is steadily increasing and exceeding the availability of loading and unloading facilities in the harbor and it can be expected that such a congestion would hamper and delay the shipping of all material of the 509th Group. Inevitably the establishment of the special equipment for production of the unit on Guam would entail clearing of jungle areas and the building in the jungle of many roads not now proposed for the island development.
3. The island of Tinian is 125 miles north of Guam and approximately 1450 miles southeast of Tokyo. It is about 10 miles long and 3 miles wide, and has a gently rolling terrain. Prior to our occupation, approximately 95% of its area was planted in sugar cane. Tinian has two major airfields, North Field and West Field, the larger being North Field with four 8500 foot landing strips directed into the prevailing easterly winds. West Field will have two 8500 foot landing strips also directed east and west. Harbor facilities capable of berthing 8 cargo vessels of the Liberty Ship type are now under construction to be completed around 15 March. An excellent network of black-topped coral base roads will connect all major installations on the island.

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4. Tinian is under the jurisdiction of the Army and is commanded by Brigadier General F. V. H. Kimble, A. C.. The 6th C. B. Brigade consisting of 13 Construction Battalions is stationed there and is available for the construction of installations required by the 509th Composite Group.

5. Areas adjacent to North Field have been selected as sites for the especially designed assembly buildings, warehouses, high explosive storage, laboratories and housing of personnel. Roads connecting these areas with the main island road network can be readily built using the unlimited supply of coral available on the island.

6. It is anticipated that early decisions will be reached and transmitted to the forward area so that construction may be started and the island of Tinian made ready for the basing of the 509th Composite Group upon its arrival during the month of June 1945.

F. L. ASHNORTH,  
Commander, USM.

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