

MY RESEARCH E- PORTFOLIO



Henry Andersen

Northern Marianas College

Birth tourism in the CNMI

Brainstorm and outline for research topic;

Topic:

Birth tourism in the CNMI.

Question:

Will the continuing increase of birth tourists to the CNMI affect the increase of foreign tourists?

If the visa waiver program is shut down because of birth tourism will that affect the CW program?

How will I be able to answer the question?

A poll or survey of people, do they know what birth tourism is, do they agree with it, will it affect tourism numbers?

Interview former Governor.

Interview someone from the current legislator.

Read his book.

Newspaper articles and periodicals.

Hard numbers from CHCC Health and Vital statistics office

References:

<https://www.congress.gov/bill/110th-congress/senate-bill/02739>


PLAW-110publ229.htm

<https://www.congress.gov/bill/110th-congress/senate-bill/02739>

Amends the Immigration and Nationality Act to provide for CNMI nonimmigrant visitor visa waivers (as currently provided for Guam) for stays of up to 45 days (current law provides for 15-day stays) in Guam or the CNMI. Directs the Secretary of Homeland Security (Secretary) to monitor such admissions and suspend the entry of nationals from a country whose nationals have created an unacceptable number of program violations or pose security or law enforcement risks.

Authorizes: (1) additional countries to be added to such visa waiver program; (2) creation of additional Guam or CNMI-only nonimmigrant visas; and (3) the Attorney General, the Secretary, and the Secretary of Labor to establish CNMI immigration operations offices.

en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Birth_tourism

WSJ.com, Birth Tourism Industry Exploiting U.S. Pacific Territory, December 21, 2017

<https://www.numbersusa.com/news/birth-tourism-industry-exploiting-us-pacific-territory>

Note Taking Sheet: Reading # 1

English 101 ON01

1. John Langan
2. McGraw-Hill
3. College Writing Skills Seventh Edition
4. 2007

Main Ideas/Points	Important Quotations	Supporting Details	Relevance to Your Assignment
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• English 101 course text book	<ul style="list-style-type: none">•	<ul style="list-style-type: none">•	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Course text book for College writing skills.
Main Ideas/Points	Important Quotations	Supporting Details	Relevance to Your Assignment

In this article, is it possible that any of the authors might have a bias about the subject matter? No.

Is the article timely or a bit outdated? Timely.

Was it published in a reputable source? Yes.

It is an academic source. Yes.

Note Taking Sheet: Reading # 2

English 101 ON01

1. Numbers USA
2. Wall Street Journal
3. Birth Tourism Industry Exploiting U.S. Pacific Territory
4. December 21, 2017
5. Page 1
6. <https://www.numbersusa.com/news/birth-tourism-industry-exploiting-us-pacific-territory>

Main Ideas/Points	Important Quotations	Supporting Details	Relevance to Your Assignment
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Percent of Chinese mothers giving birth. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 5800% 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Article 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Very.
Main Ideas/Points	Important Quotations	Supporting Details	Relevance to Your Assignment

In this article, is it possible that any of the authors might have a bias about the subject matter? No.

Is the article timely or a bit outdated? Timely.

Was it published in a reputable source? Yes.

It is an academic source. Online article.

Note Taking Sheet: Reading # 3

English 101 ON01

1. Sen. Jeff Bingaman

2. Congress.gov

3. S.2739- Consolidated Natural Resources Act of 2008

4. 2008

5. Title VII

6. <https://www.congress.gov/bill/110th-congress/senate-bill/02739>

Main Ideas/Points	Important Quotations	Supporting Details	Relevance to Your Assignment
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Immigration laws	<ul style="list-style-type: none">•	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Specifically for the CNMI	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Very.
Main Ideas/Points	Important Quotations	Supporting Details	Relevance to Your Assignment

In this article, is it possible that any of the authors might have a bias about the subject matter? No.

Is the article timely or a bit outdated? Timely.

Was it published in a reputable source? Yes.

It is an academic source. Online source.

Note Taking Sheet: Reading # 4

English 101 ON01

1. Junhan Todino
2. Marianas Variety
3. MVA official: Loss of parole program would devastate NMI economy.
4. March 09, 2018

5. Page 1

6. <http://www.mvariety.com/cnmi/cnmi-news/local/102795-mva-official-loss-of-parole-program-would-devastate-nmi-economy>

Main Ideas/Points	Important Quotations	Supporting Details	Relevance to Your Assignment
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• CNMI economy	<ul style="list-style-type: none">•	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Article	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Very.
Main Ideas/Points	Important Quotations	Supporting Details	Relevance to Your Assignment

In this article, is it possible that any of the authors might have a bias about the subject matter? Unknown.

Is the article timely or a bit outdated? Timely.

Was it published in a reputable source? No, local paper.

It is an academic source. Online article.

Note Taking Sheet: Reading # 5

English 101 ON01

1. Juan Nekai Babauta
2. Clavano Printers Cebu City, Philippines
3. In Retrospect
4. January 2017

Main Ideas/Points	Important Quotations	Supporting Details	Relevance to Your Assignment
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Subject matter expert 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • TBD 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • TBD 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expert on CNMI history and immigration laws
Main Ideas/Points	Important Quotations	Supporting Details	Relevance to Your Assignment

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In this article, is it possible that any of the authors might have a bias about the subject matter? Yes.

Is the article timely or a bit outdated? Timely.

Was it published in a reputable source? Yes.

It is an academic source. Autobiography.

**Commonwealth Healthcare Corporation
Health & Vital Statistics Office
Report: Tourist Live Births, CNMI, 2010-2017**

Date prepared: 11-9-2017

Prepared by: Wilbert G. Rospel, State Vital Statistics Registrar

Prepared for: Bryan Manabat

Table 1: Number of Live Births By Mother's Residency Status at the Time of Delivery, CNMI, 2010-2017

Mother's Residency Status	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017*	Grand Total
Resident	671	534	588	586	527	537	518	348	4,309
Temporary resident	336	278	222	184	216	191	217	179	1,823
Tourist	70	221	319	287	314	379	482	465	2,537
Grand Total	1,077	1,033	1,129	1,057	1,057	1,107	1,217	992	8,669

Source: Commonwealth Healthcare Corporation, Health & Vital Statistics Office

* = Numbers = Jan to Oct, 2017

Note 1: Mothers classified as 'Resident' are those who permanently reside in the CNMI and are citizens of the US or a Freely Associated State (FAS), or an immediate relative (e.g. husband, wife) of a US or FAS citizen.

Note 2: Mothers classified as 'Temporary Resident' are non-permanent residents who are not US or FAS citizens but who have been in the CNMI for several months/years on short or long term visas, predominantly working visas.

Note 3: Mothers classified as 'Tourist' are from other countries (predominantly Asian), and are only in the CNMI for a short period of time (usually several weeks) to deliver their baby.

Table 2: Number of Births to Tourist Mothers By Ethnic, CNMI, 2010-2017

Tourist Mother's Ethnic	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	Grand Total
ALL TOURISTS	70	221	319	287	314	379	482	465	2,537
Chinese	26	178	287	270	295	366	472	448	2,342
Korean	37	34	24	13	14	9	6	13	150
Filipino	6	5	5	1	1	2	3	-	23
Japanese	-	1	1	1	-	2	-	3	8
Other	1	3	2	2	4	-	1	1	14
White (Russian)	-	-	1	2	4	-	1	1	9
Other Asian	1	3	1	-	-	-	-	-	5

Commonwealth Healthcare Corporation
Health & Vital Statistics Office
 Report: Birth Statistics, CNMI, 2008-16

Date prepared: 11-15-2017
 Prepared by: Wilbert G. Rospel, Vital Statistics Registrar
 Prepared for: Jon Emont, Wall Street Journal

Table 1: Number of Live Births By Mother's Resident Classification, CNMI, 2008-16

Mother's Residency Status at Birth	CY2008	CY2009	CY2010	CY2011	CY2012	CY2013	CY2014	CY2015	CY2016	Grand Total
Resident	623	626	671	534	588	586	527	537	518	5,210
Temporary resident	540	434	336	278	222	184	216	191	217	2,618
Tourist	104	51	70	221	319	287	314	379	482	2,227
Grand Total	1,267	1,111	1,077	1,033	1,129	1,057	1,057	1,107	1,217	10,055

Note 1: Mothers classified as 'Resident' are those who permanently reside in the CNMI and are citizens of the US or a Freely Associated State (FAS), or an immediate relative (e.g. husband, wife) of a US or FAS citizen.

Note 2: Mothers classified as 'FAS' are mothers from Federated States of Micronesia (Pohnpei, Chuuk, Yap, and Kosrea), Republic of Palau, and Republic of the Marshall Islands.

Note 3: Mothers classified as 'Temporary Resident' are non-permanent residents who are not US or FAS citizens but who have been in the CNMI for several months/years on short or long term visas, predominantly working visas.

Note 4: Mothers classified as 'Tourist' are from other countries and are only in the CNMI for a short period of time (usually several weeks) to deliver their baby.

Table 2: Number of Live Births By Mother's Resident Status Category, CNMI, 2008-16

Mother's Residency Status at Birth	CY2008	CY2009	CY2010	CY2011	CY2012	CY2013	CY2014	CY2015	CY2016	Grand Total
Resident	623	626	671	534	588	586	527	537	518	5,210
US citizen	573	523	538	450	494	508	458	465	461	4,470
FAS citizen	50	41	76	77	58	53	55	56	42	508
Immediate relative	0	62	57	7	36	25	14	16	15	232
Temporary resident	540	434	336	278	222	184	216	191	217	2,618
Contract Worker	488	411	304	278	206	158	160	124	143	2,272
Dependent of Contract Worker	39	0	11	0	9	22	56	64	63	264
Other VISA	13	23	21	0	7	4	0	3	11	82
Tourist	104	51	70	221	319	287	314	379	482	2,227
Grand Total	1,267	1,111	1,077	1,033	1,129	1,057	1,057	1,107	1,217	10,055

Note 5: "Other Visa" includes Business Visa, Student Visa, and Missionary Visa

Table 3: Number of Tourist Live Births By Ethnicity, CNMI, 2008-16

Tourist Mother's Ethnicity	CY2008	CY2009	CY2010	CY2011	CY2012	CY2013	CY2014	CY2015	CY2016	Grand Total
Chinese	8	12	26	178	287	270	295	366	472	1,914
Korean	88	32	37	34	24	13	14	9	6	257
Filipino	5	5	6	5	5	1	1	2	3	33
Japanese	0	1	0	1	1	1	0	2	0	6
Other Asian	3	0	1	3	1	0	0	0	0	8
Other Single Ethnic	0	1	0	0	1	2	4	0	1	9
All Tourist Births	104	51	70	221	319	287	314	379	482	2,227

Note 6: "Other Asian" includes Nepalese, Thai, Asian Indian, Taiwanese, and Vietnamese

Note 7: "Other Single Ethnic includes White (Russian), and Kazakh

Note 8: Residency classification information derived from Patient Registration Application forms processed at Patient Admission Unit and filed with the Health Information Management Department. Personal information collected are entered into CHCC's Electronic Health Record System (EHR) by Admission Clerk and/or Medical Record Coder. EHR system is used to verify and validate personal informations reported to Health & Vital Statistics Office during registration.

Notify others when new results come in for this survey. [Notify others now »](#)

Birth tourism

0

SUMMARY → DESIGN SURVEY → PREVIEW & SCORE → COLLECT RESPONSES → **ANALYZE RESULTS**

CURRENT VIEW

?

RESPONDENTS: 11 of 11

SAVE AS

+ FILTER + COMPARE + SHOW

QUESTION SUMMARIES DATA TRENDS INDIVIDUAL RESPONSES

Filter or segment your data. ?

Filter by Question and Answer > Page 1

Filter by Collector > Q1

Customize Export

Filter by Completeness >

What is your age?

Answered: 7 Skipped: 4

Filter by Time Period >

Filter by Respondent Metadata >



Filter by A/B Test >

CANCEL

SAVED VIEWS (1) ?

EXPORTS ?

SHARED DATA ?

0% 10% 20% 30% 40% 50% 60% 70% 80% 90% 100%

ANSWER CHOICES

RESPONSES

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
18-24	100.00%	7
25-34	0.00%	0
35-44	0.00%	0
45-54	0.00%	0
55 or older	0.00%	0
TOTAL		7

Q2

Export

Have you ever heard the term Birth tourism? If so, what do you think it means?

Answered: 11 Skipped: 0

RESPONSES (11) TEXT ANALYSIS TAGS

PAID FEATURE

Use text analysis to search and categorize responses; see frequently-used words and phrases. To use Text Analysis, upgrade to a paid plan.

UPGRADE

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Search responses

Showing 11 responses

Yes, it's when tourists arrive to a certain place just to give birth.

3/11/2018 5:38 PM

[View respondent's answers](#)

No, I never heard of that before.

3/9/2018 12:38 AM

[View respondent's answers](#)

Yes. It's when foreigners visit the U.S. or its territories to provide their child the birth right to U.S. citizenship.

3/8/2018 10:56 PM

[View respondent's answers](#)

It means that pregnant women visit the other country where they want to get the citizenship through their baby and give a birth in there.

3/5/2018 12:14 AM

[View respondent's answers](#)

Yes. It is when a foreign tourist comes to the CNMI months before due and gives birth to a child here and the child born gains automatic US Citizenship

3/4/2018 10:20 PM

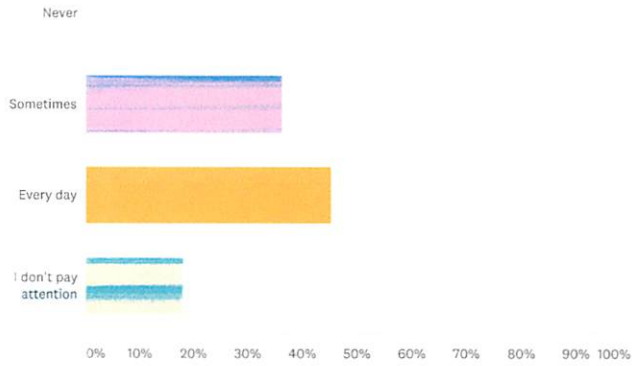
[View respondent's answers](#)

Q3

[Customize](#) [Export](#)

How often do you see pregnant foreign tourists in Saipan?

Answered: 11 Skipped: 0



ANSWER CHOICES

- ▼ Never
- ▼ Sometimes
- ▼ Every day
- ▼ I don't pay attention

TOTAL

RESPONSES

Percentage	Count
0.00%	0
36.36%	4
45.45%	5
18.18%	2
TOTAL	11

Q4

[Export](#)

From what Country do you think the most birth tourists come and why?

Answered: 11 Skipped: 0

RESPONSES (11) TEXT ANALYSIS TAGS

PAID FEATURE

Use text analysis to search and categorize responses; see frequently-used words and phrases. To use Text Analysis, upgrade to a paid plan.

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Search responses



Showing 11 responses

China

3/11/2018 5:38 PM

[View respondent's answers](#)

China because most of them always immigrate and they have one of the biggest populations in Asia.

3/9/2018 12:38 AM

[View respondent's answers](#)

China. I believe it would be because of the one child policy and to provide better and wider opportunities for their children.

3/8/2018 10:56 PM

[View respondent's answers](#)

U.S. People want to get the citizenship in u.s.

3/5/2018 12:14 AM

[View respondent's answers](#)

China. I think because of the CNMI-China/Russia visa-waiver program currently in place.

3/4/2018 10:20 PM

[View respondent's answers](#)

I think most of the birth tourists come from Asian countries -- such as Korea and China.

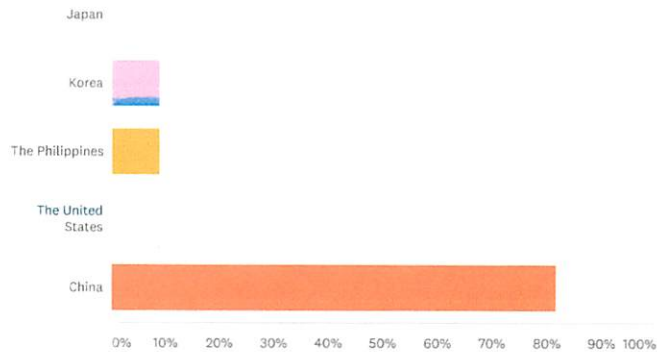
Q5

[Customize](#)

[Export ▾](#)

The economy of the CNMI is almost entirely based on tourism. What countries do you think have the most visitors to the CNMI?

Answered: 11 Skipped: 0



ANSWER CHOICES

- ▾ Japan
- ▾ Korea
- ▾ The Philippines
- ▾ The United States
- ▾ China

RESPONSES

Percentage	Count
0.00%	0
9.09%	1
9.09%	1
0.00%	0
81.82%	9
TOTAL	11

Q6

Export

Do you think the CNMI government is doing everything it can to bring up the economy or is it putting all it's efforts into foreign tourism and the casino industry? Explain.

Answered: 11 Skipped: 0

RESPONSES (11) TEXT ANALYSIS TAGS

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No. I feel like they are only paying attention to the casino industry.

3/11/2018 5:38 PM

I think it is doing both because for one, it has build a casino here on the CNMI to attract tourists and by doing that it is bringing in money. The government is also rebuilding and fixing the buildings and roads

3/9/2018 12:38 AM

I feel like it's more focused on foreign tourism and the casino because that's where the island makes most of its income.

3/8/2018 10:56 PM

The government intend to reduce the CW workers. The size of business can be increased if there are a large amount of CW workers.

3/5/2018 12:14 AM

I think it's putting efforts to bring up the economy through the #1 income which is tourism.

3/4/2018 10:20 PM

Q7

Export

Visitors from China are allowed to enter the CNMI (and only the CNMI) without a visa for up to 45 days. This "visa waiver" can be rescinded at any time by the U.S. Government. Do you think the increase of birth tourism from China will affect the visa waiver? If so, why?

Answered: 11 Skipped: 0

RESPONSES (11) TEXT ANALYSIS TAGS

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Showing 11 responses

I'm not sure

3/11/2018 5:38 PM

I'm not sure as it could go either way.

3/9/2018 12:38 AM

I believe so because they are now trying to come up with a bill that will shorten their visit from 45 days to 15 days due to birth tourism.

3/8/2018 10:56 PM

If birth tourism increase, it is expected that anyone without a visa will be banned.
 3/5/2018 12:14 AM

[view respondent's answers](#)

Yes, if it continues to be a problem as it will look like more and more are taking advantage of giving birth for US citizenship rather than tourism solely.

3/4/2018 10:20 PM

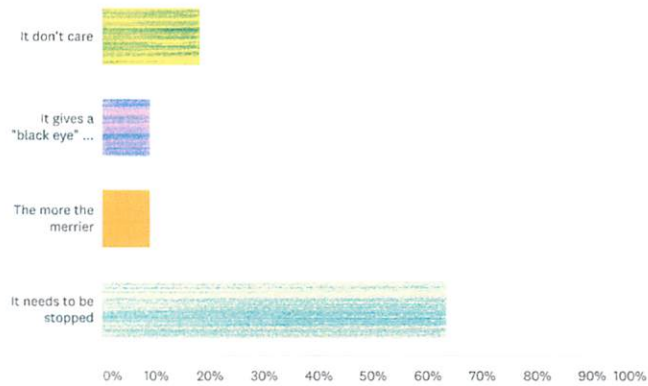
[view respondent's answers](#)

Q8

[Customize](#) [Export](#)

What is your opinion on birth tourism in the CNMI?

Answered: 11 Skipped: 0



ANSWER CHOICES

RESPONSES

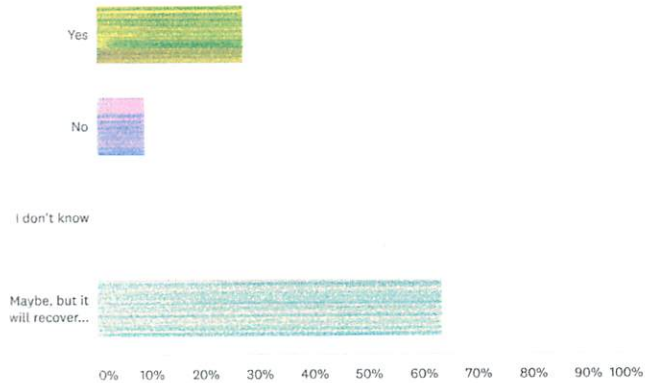
▼ it don't care	18.18%	2
▼ it gives a "black eye" to the CNMI	9.09%	1
▼ The more the merrier	9.09%	1
▼ It needs to be stopped	63.64%	7
TOTAL		11

Q9

Customize Export

Would the economy of the CNMI crash without visitors from China?

Answered: 11 Skipped: 0



ANSWER CHOICES

- Yes
- No
- I don't know
- Maybe, but it will recover like it did after the garment industry left.

RESPONSES

Percentage	Count
27.27%	3
9.09%	1
0.00%	0
63.64%	7
TOTAL	11

Q10

Export

What do you think should be done about birth tourists that try to come to the CNMI?

Answered: 11 Skipped: 0

RESPONSES (11) TEXT ANALYSIS TAGS

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Use text analysis to search and categorize responses; see frequently-used words and phrases. To use Text Analysis, upgrade to a paid plan.

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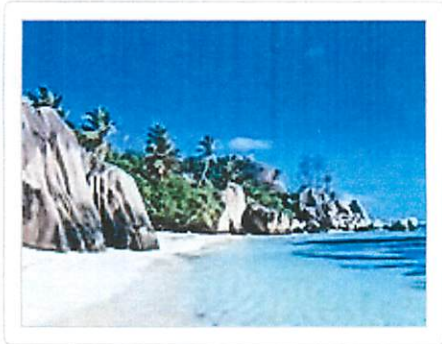
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- A woman who is about to give birth should not be permitted on our islands. They should wait to visit our islands after they have given birth.
3/11/2018 5:38 PM [View respondent's answers](#)
- I think that while birth tourists should try to come to the CNMI, but limit the number of tourists that enters
3/9/2018 12:38 AM [View respondent's answers](#)
- I think that the airlines, TSA, and embassy need to become more strict with pregnant women traveling when they are close to term. This could also have adverse effects on the unborn child.
3/8/2018 10:56 PM [View respondent's answers](#)
- It is dangerous for pregnant women to take airplane. Also, it is not right to be born only for citizenship in another country, not in one's own country.
3/5/2018 12:14 AM [View respondent's answers](#)
- I think that it should be stopped or limited.
3/4/2018 10:20 PM [View respondent's answers](#)

Birth Tourism Industry Exploiting U.S. Pacific Territory



PUBLISHED: Thu, DEC 21st 2017 @ 9:44 am EST

The Birth Tourism industry from both China and Russia is exploiting the nation's birthright citizenship laws on the Pacific Island of Saipan in the Northern Mariana Islands, a U.S. territory. Tourists from both countries can visit the island for up to 45 days without a visa, and any children born on the island automatically receive U.S. citizenship.

Since 2009, the number of births to Chinese mothers who have received automatic U.S. citizenship on Saipan has increased by 5800%.

“As long as you have birthright citizenship, it’s true this is something that can be exploited,” Doris Meissner, former commissioner of the U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service and senior fellow at the Migration Policy Institute, told the *Wall Street Journal*. “This is the first I’ve heard of Saipan. That’s actually quite clever.”

According to birth-tour operators in China, more than 10,000 Chinese mothers traveled to the U.S. in 2012 to give birth so their children can automatically receive citizenship. As long as the foreign mothers enter the U.S. legally and don’t overstay their visa, there is nothing illegal about birth tourism under current law.

Rep. Steve King (R-Iowa) introduces legislation each Congress, H.R. 140, that would end Birthright Citizenship. The Birthright Citizenship Act would require that at least one parent be a U.S. citizen or legal permanent resident (green card holder) in order for a child born in the U.S. to automatically receive citizenship. The bill is part of NumbersUSA's [5 Great Immigration Solutions](#).

For more on this story, see the [WSJ.com](#).

Updated: Thu, Jan 4th 2018 @ 9:45am EST

Last update Sat, 10 Mar 2018 12am

SETTINGS

Headlines: 15% of SHEFA recipients return to NMI, official says

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MVA official: Loss of parole program would devastate NMI economy

09 Mar 2018

By Junhan B. Todiño - junhan@mvariety.com - Variety News Staff



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IT would be reckless on the part of the federal government to terminate the parole program for Chinese and Russian tourists who comprise 35 percent of arrivals in the CNMI, Marianas Visitors Authority Managing Director Chris Concepcion said.

"To take it away at this critical time would be devastating for the tourism industry and for the entire CNMI economy," he added.

He said the CNMI economy is heavily dependent on the tourism industry. The federal government, he added, should help the CNMI and not try to limit its economic development.

"At this point, it is premature to be discussing this scenario so we'll leave it at that. We trust that our elected leaders are doing their part to ensure economic stability by safeguarding the very tools the federal government gave us in order to reduce reliance on federal dollars."

Concepcion said the commonwealth needs strong advocates to defend its interests at all times and at all levels of government.

He noted that the CNMI does not control its borders anymore.

"When we did control our borders we had a better handle on who was coming in and who was leaving the CNMI," he said. "At any given time we could locate overstayers easily."

The federal government, which has enormous resources at its disposal can't do the same, but this should not mean that the CNMI gets punished for it, Concepcion said.

At present, he added, Korea and Japan make up roughly 60 percent of arrivals to the CNMI. For diversification purposes, it is healthy and wise to have a three-market approach: 30 percent Japan, 30 percent Korea, and 30 percent China, Concepcion said.

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Marianas Variety

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Local DOL: Construction workers can claim back wages in NMI

15% of SHEFA



EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITY
The Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands (CNMI) Judiciary is seeking a highly motivated individual for various positions.
[CLICK HERE FOR MORE DETAILS](#)

TODAY'S FRONT PAGE



Saipan Tribune
CARE: Still 46 families in its care

TAGA SPORTS



TAGA
SHARING TOP BILLING IN THE POOL

Births by foreign parents raise questions

By [Erwin Encinares](#) | Posted on [Nov 30 2016](#)

Tag: [CBP](#), [CHCC](#), [China](#), [CNMI](#)

A large chunk of live births in the Commonwealth during a more than two-year period are being attributed to foreign nationals, mainly Chinese tourists, which has raised some eyebrows on Capital Hill.

Senate Health and Welfare committee chair Sen. Teresita Santos (R-Rota), for one, is urging U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services to look into this and take appropriate action.

"With statistics provided by the [Commonwealth Healthcare Corp.] showing that Chinese birth rate has been dramatically increasing year after year here in the CNMI, our USCIS should actively and proactively be involved in the enforcement of the U.S. immigration laws as this matter falls under their jurisdiction," said Santos.

"The USCIS visa waiver program [could] also be revisited, that is, instead of granting a 45-day visitor waiver, it may be reduced to 21 days like other countries' visa waiver for U.S. citizens," suggested Santos.

Santos also reiterated the need for airlines to strictly enforce their flying restrictions to not only combat birth tourism, but also to avoid complications brought about by the unusual conditions of traveling when pregnant.

"Any airline caught in violation of such policy shall be penalized at the maximum, including revocation of its license to fly and/or incarceration if the infant is born with physical or mental defects due to airline screening radiation exposure, cabin pressure altitude or other health risks associated when travelling during pregnancy," she said.

House Federal and Foreign Affairs Committee chair Rep. Angel Demapan (R-Saipan) thinks that CHCC numbers calls for concern mostly on the possibility that certain tour agency establishments offer these kinds of services as a package to those who can afford it.

"The numbers are very concerning. Still, we would like to have more concrete data on exactly how many of these births from foreign parents are really tourist births by definition—meaning they came in here as tourists for the purpose of giving birth," he said.

Demapan said that meetings with U.S. Customs and Border Protection have brought up the topic for discussion. The only hindrance to CBP is the amendment of the law without discriminating against pregnant women. Demapan reiterated that changing the language of the law would affect all Chinese

tourists, not just the pregnant.

"It is very concerning that this parity [between Chinese and other ethnicities] is very large, but I've had several meetings with the CBP. There are a lot of things that come into play here," he said.

"Obviously, there are federal and local laws, and we walk this fine line discriminating against pregnant travel, so we can't just turn travelers away just because they are pregnant. However, what we can look at from an immigration standpoint is in the amount of time that travelers are allowed to be in the CNMI, we have to compare that time to the term of the pregnancy," said Demapan, referring to possible solutions.

POLL

Sorry, there are no polls available at the moment.

"The big question is how do we make a decision that is aimed at curbing this circumvention of the law, but also ensure that that decision is not discriminating. That is one of the hardships the CBP is experiencing—making that call to ensure that there is no discrimination because in the end, that policy may backfire. There are human rights advocates and there are human rights that need to be followed," he added.

Demapan thinks that the CNMI government is at a disadvantage because of this.

"The local government right now is in a difficult position because we can't make any policies on the immigration side relating to the entry of these foreign nationals into American soil," he said.

House Federal and Foreign Affairs Committee member Rep. John Paul Sablan (R-Saipan) mentioned that payment for the medical services is to be paid for prior to the processing of papers by CHCC.

"Before [CHCC] issues the birth certificate, they make sure that these individuals that were provided services pay for the billing, which is over thousands of dollars. That is the latest in-house policy of CHCC. You need the birth certificate to create the passport for the child. Without that, there is no way you can apply for a U.S. passport for the child," he said.

A federal law known as the Emergency Medical Treatment and Labor Act, or EMTALA mandates CHCC to offer aid to those in need, regardless of status or lack of insurance.

"There are laws in place that [CHCC] cannot decline services. Despite having no insurance, there is a law that the lone hospital has to provide services to anybody. However, they can provide in-house policies before providing the necessary documents such as the birth certificate. They have every right to make sure that such a patient is required to pay all the dues for the services that were provided for the patient," said Sablan.

The spike in live births is tracked to the time when visa waivers for Chinese and Russian tourists were lifted in 2009.

According to CHCC Health & Vital Statistics Office, total births starting from January 2014 up to October of 2016 yielded a total of 3,141. This included resident, temporary resident, and tourist births on Saipan.

The statistics were separated by ethnicity and by status, resulting in pretty surprising results.

From January 2014 to October 2016, a total of 1,034 births of Chinese parents were recorded, comprising 32.92 percent of total births on Saipan. Births of Korean national parents comprised 29 total births, which is a puny 0.92 percent of total births on Saipan.

In 2009, only eight babies were born of Chinese parents.

In 2014, a total of 1,076 babies of foreign national parents were born on Saipan, with China consisting of 1,034 live births at 96.38 percent. Second to China was Korea, at 29 live births (2.69 percent),

Philippines at six live births (0.55 percent), Japan at two live births (0.18 percent), Russia at four live births (0.37 percent), and Kazakhstan, with one live birth for 2014 (0.09 percent).

All information is from January 2014 to October 2016.

According to federal law, the citizenship clause states, "All persons born or naturalized in the United States, and subject to the jurisdiction thereof, are citizens of the United States and of the state wherein they reside."

This is also known as "jus soli," or the "right of the soil," which means that anyone born in countries that follow jus soli is automatically a citizen of that country.

As of today, only two countries practice jus soli: Canada and the U.S.

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Erwin Encinares | Reporter

Erwin Charles Tan Encinares holds a bachelor's degree from the Chiang Kai Shek College and has covered a wide spectrum of assignments for the Saipan Tribune. Encinares is the paper's political reporter.

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Chinese 'birth tourism' booming territory

BY REBECCA SHABAD - 02/11/14 12:35 PM EST

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A growing number of pregnant Chinese women are having their babies in the U.S. territory of Saipan, automatically giving the children American citizenship, according to the region's congressman.

Del. Gregorio Sablan (D) represents Saipan and the rest of the Northern Mariana Islands in Congress. The U.S. territory is in the Pacific Ocean, roughly 3,700 miles west of Honolulu and a four-hour flight from China.

Sablan said in an ABC News report that he has reached out to the Department of Homeland Security to look into the "birth tourism" situation.

"We want to fix this and we want to make sure that this small problem remains very small," Sablan said.

In 2009, only eight Chinese babies were born on Saipan. In 2012, that number jumped to 282, according to the report.

Now, 71 percent of babies born on the island are "American-born Chinese."

The practice is not illegal, and no visa is required to visit the island.

Rep. Steve King (R-Iowa), a staunch proponent of strict immigration rules, said the births can be a foothold into America.

"When they become of age, they can apply to bring their families into the United States," he said.

An ABC News reporter and a producer, who posed as pregnant, conducted an undercover video-shoot as they visited a birth tourism agency in Beijing. An

[VIEW ALL](#)

agent attempted to sell them a package to Saipan totaling \$27,000, which gives newborn babies American citizenship documents.

The two journalists turned down the offer, and visited Saipan themselves. In a separate undercover shoot, a doctor there told them "I know everything you need to know about having an American baby. You're in safe hands."

TAGS SAIPAN STEVE KING GREGORIO KILILI CAMACHO SABLAN CITIZENSHIP

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'Birth tourism' in Saipan causing headaches for USA

'Birth tourism' in Saipan causing headaches for USA

Zach Coleman, USA TODAY Published 11:19 a.m. ET Sept. 9, 2013 | Updated 6:17 p.m. ET Sept. 9, 2013

U.S. officials are quietly taking steps to stem the flow of pregnant Chinese tourists coming to the Northern Marianas islands, a U.S. Pacific territory, to give birth.



(Photo: Koichi Kamoshida, Getty Images)

HONG KONG — The United States is putting the word out to Chinese travel agencies: Stop allowing pregnant Chinese women to visit the Northern Mariana Islands to give birth.

Why would the USA care? Because any child born in this string of 15 islands between the Philippines and Hawaii is eligible for U.S. citizenship, and in the past two years, the number of women delivering babies here has jumped dramatically.

Eloy Inos, the islands' governor, told the *Saipan Tribune* that immigration agents had sent home about 20 "birth tourists" in the past three to four months because of "documentation problems."

And last month, a pregnant tourist who had arrived on a charter flight from Shanghai late one evening was sent back home early the next morning. Fenny He, the leader of the tour involved, told the *Tribune* she advised the woman not to go but "she refused to listen."

Chinese tourist traffic to the islands in the first seven months of this year already matched arrivals for all of 2012, with the figure for July alone rising 49% to 11,177. Overall births in the Northern Marianas have been falling, but the *Marianas Variety* newspaper reports that births to ethnic Chinese rose 175% between 2010 and 2012 and last year outnumbered those of any other ethnicity.



Eloy Inos, the islands' governor, told the 'Saipan Tribune' that immigration agents had sent home about 20 so-called birth tourists in the last three to four months. (Photo: Gemma Q. Casas, AP)

Many of the pregnant women arrive to avoid China's retribution, fines or worse that come with the Communist country's one-child policy. The Northern Marianas are a convenient refuge because Chinese can visit the islands for up to 45 days without a visa under an exemption to U.S. immigration rules intended to foster tourism.

And because it is one of a handful of official U.S. territories (Puerto Rico is another), children born in the Northern Marianas are eligible for U.S. citizenship.

Chinese tourist traffic of all kinds is now big business for the Northern Marianas. Northern Marianas officials are eager to head off the birth tourism problem to make sure it does not prompt the USA to revoke the visa waiver for Chinese tourists, something no competing U.S. destination can offer. Nearby Guam is seeking a similar waiver to compete.

Tourism is more important than ever here since the demise of the Northern Marianas textile industry. The industry thrived on exemptions from U.S. laws on minimum wages and foreign labor to produce "Made in America" clothes at cut rates. But a bill signed by President George W. Bush in 2007 raising the minimum wage in the mainland United States applies to the Northern Marianas as well, though implementation takes place over a longer period.

The Northern Marianas came into the possession of the United States after being wrested from the Japanese during battle in World War II. The people living on the islands, only three of which are permanently inhabited, have declined independence.

Today, Saipan, the largest island, receives about eight charter flights a week from the Chinese cities of Guangzhou, Shanghai and Beijing with Wuhan and other cities set for connections too. And many businesses cater specifically to the maternity traffic.

The operator of one Saipan guesthouse told Radio Free Asia that she hosted 50 Chinese mothers last year, charging them \$11,000 for accommodations, travel, translation help and some medical care, though most also incurred around \$10,000 in other medical bills.

Most of those flights are organized by Century Tours, a company owned by Hong Kong's Tan family, who previously pioneered the islands' maternity business and own several Saipan hotels.

Inos and the islands' non-voting congressman in Washington have appealed to the Department of Homeland Security to deny entry to the response, U.S. immigration has been passing the word directly to Chinese travel companies to discourage maternity traffic.

Now, notes with certain Saipan flights and travel packages on the popular Chinese travel website Ctrip say parents should be aware that U.S. immigration has been passing the word directly to Chinese travel companies to discourage maternity traffic.

<https://www.usatoday.com/story/news/world/2013/09/09/chinese-tourist-births-cnmi/2784797/>

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More Birth-Tourism Births Than Indigenous Births in CNMI

By David North on March 15, 2013

There were more births to Chinese tourists in the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands last year than there were to the indigenous population, the *Marianas Variety* is reporting in its March 14 edition.

These islands, a U.S. territory just north of Guam in the Western Pacific, are known to be attractive to wealthy pregnant Chinese women wanting to give their babies U.S. citizenship — the ultimate birthday gift in their eyes — as we reported in a previous blog, but the full extent of the trend was not known until now.

Data provided in the article, and via e-mail, indicate that more than one-third of the islands' births last year were to Chinese women, with the total up by 175 percent from the level of just two years ago. These were the numbers of births in 2012:

- Chinese, mostly tourists: 356
- Indigenous residents: 295
- Filipino residents: 216



- Koreans: 32
- Caucasian residents: 19
- All others: 86
- **Total: 1,004**

While the number of births to Chinese mothers soared, those to the indigenous, Filipino, and Korean populations fell by about one-third, on average, compared to 2010.

The prevailing pattern, according to Tammy Doty, who has been covering this story for the *Variety*, is for pregnant Chinese women, in their last few weeks of pregnancy, to fly into the Saipan airport bearing Guam-and-Marianas-only visa waivers provided by U.S. law. They are often accompanied by their husbands, and are often responding to Mandarin-language websites promoting birth tourism in the CNMI.

Then they are served by a comprehensive, Mandarin-speaking birth facilitation industry that has bloomed lately. Once the babies have been born and have received their brand-new passports, everyone returns to China.

Since the birthing "packages" come to \$6,000-\$8,000 each and there are many other expenditures by these families, birth tourism is a welcome economic boost to the local economy, which has little else going for it. There are no indications that the local government is doing anything to discourage it.

The long-term prospects are that the CNMI will never see these people again; once a child reaches college age he or she will probably come to the U.S. Mainland or Hawaii; once 21, he or she can file papers for the admission of the parents, in a sort of delayed-action chain migration.

A note on CNMI birth statistics: The Commonwealth tracks births by the ethnicity of the mother, with no distinction as to the mother's citizenship, so some small portion of the Chinese births noted above, and perhaps some of the Korean ones, are to Chinese and Korean residents of these islands. There is a large resident Filipino population, mostly of nonimmigrant workers, and there are also a few Mainlander residents (noted as Caucasians).

To further complicate things — and this may be unique in the world — there are *two* indigenous populations, the more numerous Chamorros with 251 births and the Carolinians with 44. During the days of the Spanish Empire the rulers found that Carolinians, who were from other Spanish islands in the Pacific, were more likely to work than the Chamorros, so they brought them to Saipan and to the other CNMI islands.

All 1,004 babies, whatever the ethnicity or citizenship of the mother, are instant US citizens.

For more on birth tourism as an immigration issue see the CIS *Backgrounder* "Birthright Citizenship: A Global Comparison" by my colleague, Jon Feere. He makes the point that the United States and Canada are among the few nations that automatically grant citizenship to all born within their boundaries.

Topics: Commonwealth of the Northern Marianas Islands (CNMI) and Immigration, Birthright Citizenship



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CHCC Title X Family Planning Services
The CNMI Family Planning Program is funded by the Department of Health and Human Services Office of Population Affairs, Title X

Chinese national fails to escape ports police

By [Erwin Encinares](#) | Posted on Jan 11 2017

Tag: [Chris Tenorio](#), [CNMI](#), [Commonwealth Ports Authority](#), [Ports Police](#)

A foreign national reportedly jumped over the fence in the smoking area of the Francisco C. Ada/Saipan International Airport last Jan. 6 after being denied entry by immigration.

Commonwealth Ports Authority executive director Chris Tenorio, along with other unofficial sources, confirmed the incident.

Tenorio, when asked by Saipan Tribune, declined to provide further details about the incident.

"[CPA] cannot say anything at the moment. I am just waiting for [Commonwealth] Ports Police to submit the report to me," said Tenorio.

Unofficial sources said the Chinese national, who was denied entry to the CNMI, jumped over the fence at the smoking area, crossed the runway, and jumped the fence going toward Obyan Beach before being seen by a passerby.

The passerby then informed the Ports Police, which caught the Chinese national and brought him back to the airport.

The Chinese and Russian visa waiver program has exponentially increased the amount of tourist arrivals in the CNMI, with the former leading in numbers of overall tourist arrivals.

Chinese tourist arrivals were at its peak last fiscal year 2016, with numbers reaching more than 200,000—almost half of the total number of foreign arrivals in the CNMI.

Chinese nationals are also the leading nationality in tourist childbirths, at more than 90 percent of total tourist births in the CNMI.

TODAY'S FRONT PAGE



Erwin Encinares | Reporter

Erwin Charles Tan Encinares holds a bachelor's degree from the Chiang Kai Shek College and has covered a wide spectrum of assignments for the Saipan Tribune. Encinares is the paper's political reporter.

String of abuses clouds future of Saipan visa program

ABC News

A push to save and expand a visa program unique to the [Northern Mariana Islands](#) is hitting skids after recent cases of labor abuse and visa fraud, delivering a major blow to the U.S. commonwealth's economy, which relies heavily on foreign workers.

The visa classification, known as CW-1, allows employers to seek permission to hire foreign workers and is aimed at alleviating a labor shortage among the Pacific islands' population of roughly 52,000. The program was launched about a decade ago and has brought in nurses, teachers, hotel maids, bakers and more.

But a recent spate of visa abuses in the Northern Mariana Islands has cast a shadow over efforts to bolster the program, due to sunset next year.

Just this month, labor authorities reached a \$14 million settlement with Chinese companies for exploiting a visa waiver loophole to bring in illegal workers. And a local businessman and two associates were convicted in federal court for their role in a scheme to defraud foreigners by promising them U.S. jobs and green cards in exchange for cash.

"Seen from the distance of Washington, D.C., this looks like a program that doesn't deserve to be continued — it's not being properly monitored for abuse," said Bruce Mailman, an attorney at Mailman & Kara in Saipan who has worked with companies employing workers on the CW-1 visa. Still, "it's a critical program for this place."

Only 4,999 visas have been allotted for 2019, half of what was available the previous year.

Cutting the number of visas threatens jobs and hurts the Marianas economy, Rep. Gregorio Sablan, a Democrat representing the islands, said in a March 23 statement. He also has said recent violations of U.S. law give the Marianas a black eye and make it increasingly challenging to maintain a sufficient workforce.

A bill introduced in January by Sablan and U.S. Sen. Lisa Murkowski, an Alaska Republican who recently visited the islands, seeks to extend the program for another decade. It would increase the number of visas allotted and crack down on oversight.

Provisions to defend against labor abuses include allowing only "legitimate businesses" to be approved for permits — defined as firms that comply with wage laws and safety regulations for at least five years. Companies cannot engage in

illegal activities, such as [human trafficking](#), according to a version of the bill from March 20. It also reiterates that construction firms are barred from using the program, a change that passed into law last year in a separate bill.

The U.S. Labor Department has found contractors with the Hong Kong firm Imperial Pacific in violation of most of those requirements. Imperial Pacific is building a casino in Saipan, the largest of the Northern Mariana Islands. But construction stalled as thousands of illegal workers returned home to China following an FBI raid after a Chinese man died in a construction accident.

The legislation is on hold as Congress is in recess until April 9. By the time lawmakers are back in session, the government will already be accepting applications for 2019.

Companies have long known the CW-1 program would end but continued to favor the program over other visas because it allows them to pay the local [minimum wage](#). In 2008, when the program was introduced, that was \$3.55 an hour, far below federally mandated levels.

But that incentive is disappearing. Incremental changes over the years have raised the visa's required hourly wage to \$7.05, and by this September it will match the federal minimum wage of \$7.25 an hour.

Saipan businesses that rely on the program are scrambling to make changes. Hong Electric Enterprises, an electric supply firm, has brought in employees on CW-1 permits for years and is working to transition some workers to other visas given uncertainty over the program. "We cannot afford to lose key personnel," said Carol Tamparong, a Hong Electric manager who originally came on a permit.

Employers could consider visas including the H-1B for skilled workers or the H-2B for seasonal work, as a federal cap that applies in other states doesn't apply to the Northern Mariana Islands, given the local labor shortage, said Janet King, an immigration attorney in Saipan. Other visas, like the EB-3, which cover a range of jobs from accounting clerks to architects, also confer visa applicants more rights and a path toward a green card.

By comparison, a CW-1 visa applies only within the commonwealth and doesn't allow the holder to travel or work elsewhere in the U.S.

More than half of the Northern Mariana Islands' workforce is from China, the Philippines and elsewhere, filling 80 percent of all construction and hospitality jobs.

Without those workers, the commonwealth's economy would have clocked as much as a 62 percent reduction in 2015, according to a May report by the Government Accountability Office.

Demand for the CW-1 program exceeded the number of available permits for the first time in 2016, and the report predicted a labor shortage given plans for additional hotels, casinos and other projects that would require thousands of

employees.

Foreign workers are vital to the islands, Mailman said.

"Because of our distance from the U.S. mainland, it's kind of hard to entice people to come out here for jobs that pay below the scale for what they're used to, despite being a tropical paradise," he said.

February 15, 2018, 8:00 PM GMT+10

A Chinese Casino Has Conquered a Piece of America

Construction workers maimed and killed. Millions paid to the governor's family. An impossibly lucrative gambling operation. And all on U.S. soil.



▲ Imperial Pacific's casino under construction in Garapan, on the island of Saipan. PHOTOGRAPHER: MOISES SAMAN/MAGNUM PHOTOS FOR BLOOMBERG BUSINESSWEEK

By Matthew Campbell

Dr. Marty Rohringer was ending a graveyard shift at the lone hospital on Saipan, the exceptionally remote U.S. island, when four Chinese men arrived with a body.

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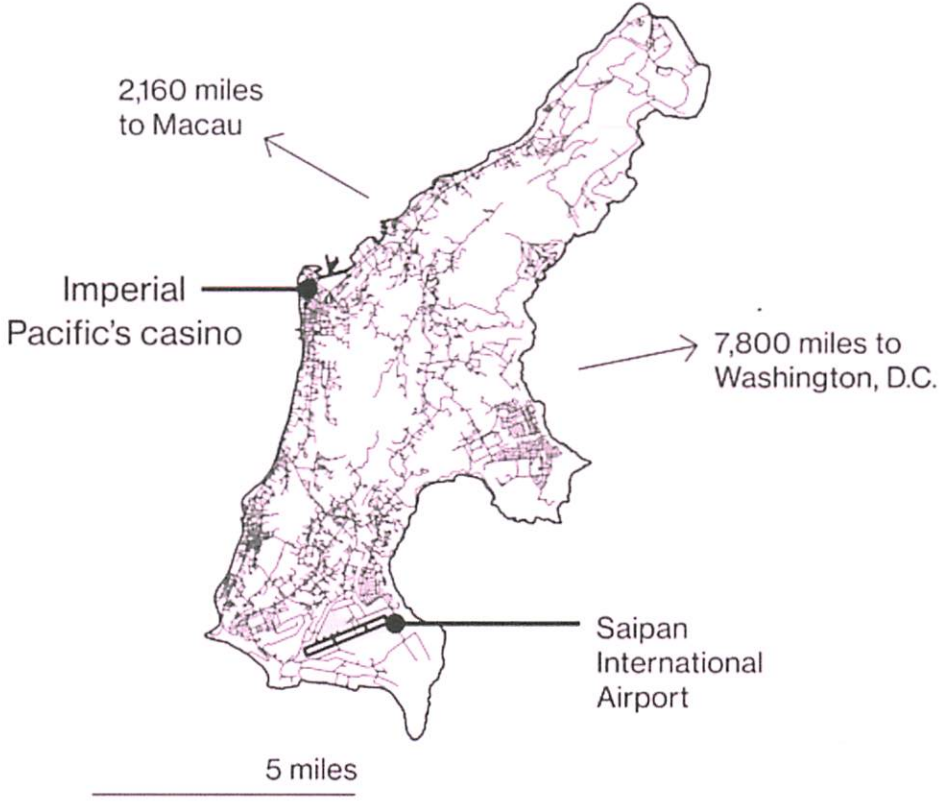
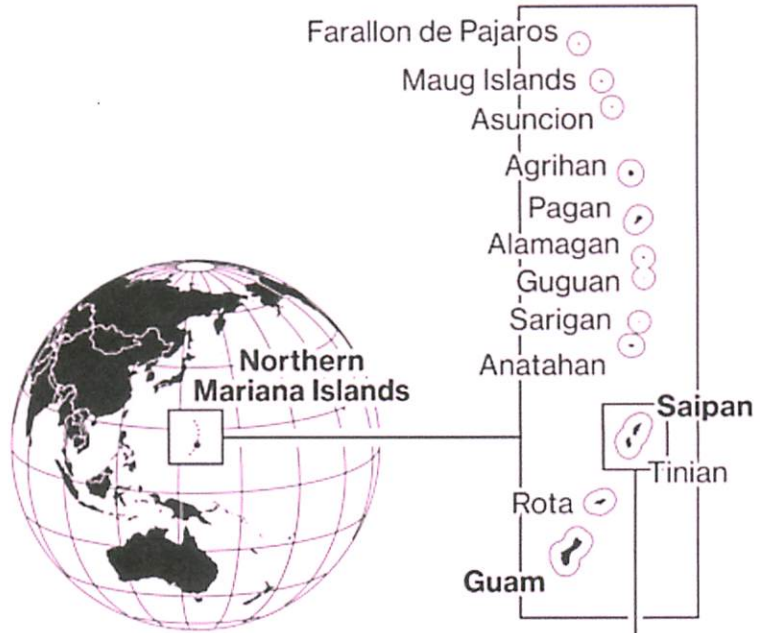
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The figure they had with them—a middle-aged man, also Chinese, naked but for his underwear—was unresponsive, and had clearly suffered severe trauma. As an orderly lifted him onto a gurney, the four men indicated in broken English that he had fallen from a hotel-room balcony.

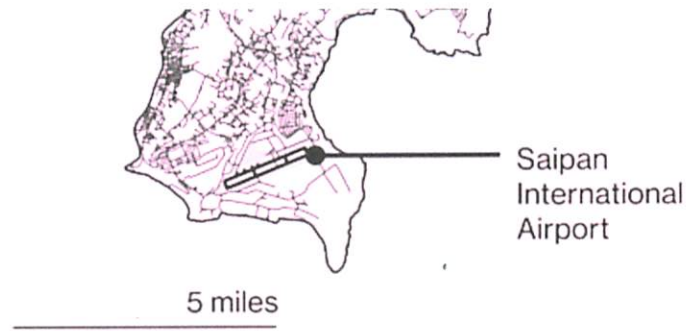
Rohringer began to evaluate the man under the ER's harsh fluorescent lights. His skin was pallid and turning blue, and it was obvious that he could not be revived. One of the men who'd arrived with the body started to mime chest compressions: Was there really nothing to be done? Rohringer pronounced the man dead just before 8 a.m. on March 22, 2017. Already, the medical staff suspected that the story of his fall was a lie.

America, But Way Over There



GRAPHIC BY BLOOMBERG BUSINESSWEEK. DATA: OPENSTREETMAP





GRAPHIC BY BLOOMBERG BUSINESSWEEK. DATA: OPENSTREETMAP

visas. So many laborers were getting hurt that Rohringer's colleagues began keeping an unofficial spreadsheet, separate from standard hospital records: a grim catalog of broken bones, lacerations, puncture wounds, dislocated limbs, and eyes penetrated by flying metal. The dead man Rohringer saw was not, of course, a tourist who'd stumbled over a railing—he was a builder named Hu Yuanyou, and he'd plummeted from a scaffold. His colleagues hadn't called 911; instead, they'd pulled the work clothes off his broken body in a clumsy attempt to obscure his identity. The less that outsiders learned about the casino, the better.

Hu died building what's become, on paper, the most successful gambling operation in history. In the first half of 2017, table for table, Imperial Pacific turned over nearly six times more cash than the fanciest gaming facilities in Macau, which themselves dwarf the activity in Las Vegas. And that was before Imperial Pacific opened its lavish megacasino in July.

Given Macau's status as a hub for industrial-scale money laundering, the Saipan figures have left gaming veterans astonished that they could be generated on U.S. soil, under Washington's ostensible oversight. Eight casino executives and analysts interviewed for this story, all with extensive experience of the Asian gaming trade, said they saw no way such volumes could be generated legitimately. Asked if there could be a benign explanation for such instantaneous success at a casino more than three hours' flight from any major city, on a drowsy island where the best hotel is a 1970s-era Hyatt, one of the executives burst out laughing.

Per capita, there's almost certainly more Chinese money moving through Saipan than anywhere else in the world. The unprecedented flow of capital has allowed Imperial Pacific to operate in ways that would be unthinkable within the 50 states. When laws have become inconvenient to the company, they've been flouted; when the requirements of its contract with the government have become onerous, they've been removed; when legislators have tried to interfere, they've been ignored. Imperial Pacific has made millions of dollars in payments to family members of the territory's governor, Ralph DeLeon Guerrero Torres. Remarkably, the company has also enjoyed the support of a gold-plated roster of American politicians. Its advisers and board of directors have included former directors of the CIA and FBI and former governors of Mississippi, New York, and Pennsylvania.

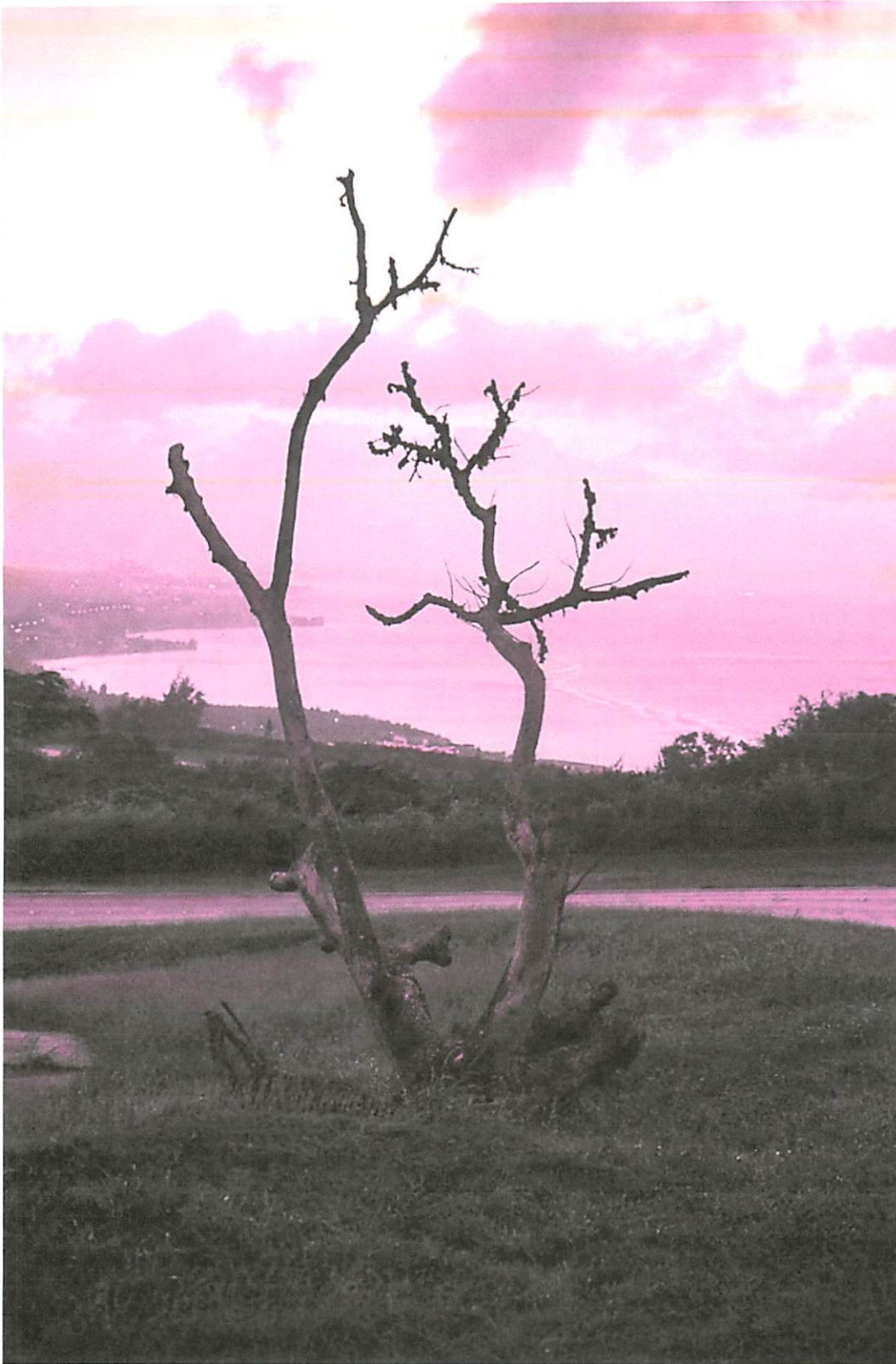
In a written response to questions from *Bloomberg Businessweek*, Imperial Pacific said it has "strived and [is] committed to comply with local and federal laws" and that it "categorically denies" impropriety in its dealings with the government. Torres's office said that all changes to laws or policies were undertaken "with the intent of achieving economic growth within the boundaries of the law."

Imperial Pacific's overnight domination of Saipan has generated deep unease among the island's citizens, many of whom are convinced that their home has been bought. The company, they believe, set out to take over a little piece of America, politicians and all. Given the billions of dollars at stake, it's not surprising someone would try. What's shocking is that, so far, it seems to be working.

I landed in Saipan in September, well after midnight and thoroughly disoriented. Just a few hours earlier, I'd flown out of Hong Kong on a vector southeast over the Pacific; now I was disembarking into tropical warmth and the familiar scene of a U.S. Customs and Border Protection checkpoint. Many of my fellow passengers were Chinese, and as they waited for immigration agents to arrive, I went to swipe my passport at one of the automated entry kiosks. Three of the government machines had been paid for by Imperial Pacific.

In my rental car, I circled the airport parking lot, searching in the darkness for the road into town. On the periphery, I could just make out a series of squat concrete structures—Japanese bunkers from World War II. In 1944, American forces sweeping the Pacific identified Saipan as an essential conquest: From its runways, bombers could reach Tokyo. The battle for the island was ferocious, and at its conclusion, rather than surrender, thousands of Japanese soldiers and civilians hurled themselves from a promontory

that's been known ever since as Suicide Cliff.



▲ The lights of Garapan from a hill near Suicide Cliff. PHOTOGRAPHER: MOISES SAMAN/MAGNUM PHOTOS FOR BLOOMBERG BUSINESSWEEK

In the morning, Saipan revealed itself in some of the most blinding sunlight I've ever experienced. At 46.5 square miles, the island is just smaller than San Francisco, a dot in the semicircle of undersea mountains that stretches from Indonesia to Japan. Inland Saipan is verdant, with

thickets of coconut and papaya trees climbing limestone hills. But most locals live along the flat western coast, amid scruffy strip malls and car dealerships. The population is a mix of old-stock Chamorros, as most native islanders are known, and migrants from the mainland U.S., many of them the sort of amiable oddballs who might otherwise move to Key West. For visitors, Saipan's chief charm is the combination of Americana and the exotic, such as Little League games with snack stations of taro and breadfruit. "Exotic" cuts both ways, of course, and several businesses offer Asian tourists access to American eccentricities, like assault rifles. "Experience the thrill of firing a real gun," reads an advertisement for a local shooting range. "In Saipan, it's legal and is guaranteed by the United States Constitutions 3rd Amendment."

After World War II, the U.S. claimed Saipan and its sisters, eventually forming the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands. But the place had little economic purpose. In the 1970s, to encourage development, Washington exempted the CNMI from minimum wage and immigration laws, and major retailers rushed into Saipan, eager to label as "Made in U.S.A." clothing sewn by workers making \$2.15 an hour. The industry eventually collapsed, taking with it Saipan's tax base. A 2011 cash shortage was so severe that the hospital ran out of bedsheets.

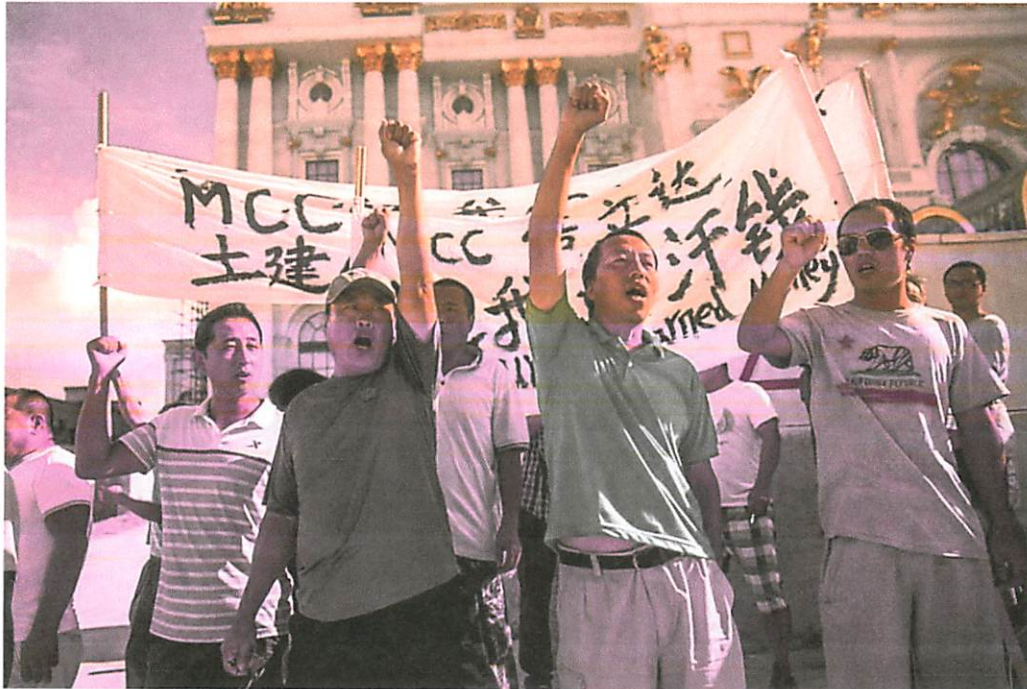
Isolated, out-of-options municipalities have often turned to casinos for economic salvation, but Saipan's heavily Catholic voters had long opposed the idea at the ballot box. Structurally, the CNMI government resembles an American state: bicameral legislature, supreme court, branches of the Democratic and Republican parties. But in practice, politics is dominated by two prominent families, one of them the Deleon Guerreros. Ralph Deleon Guerrero Torres was among those who voted against a casino proposal in 2013, when he was president of the senate.

Not long after the vote, with money stresses intensifying, Torres and several other politicians flew to Hong Kong and Macau for what they called a fact-finding trip to reconsider the casino option. Whatever facts they found changed their minds. They returned to Saipan, introduced a bill authorizing

a casino concession, and passed it with little debate. When a local activist gathered signatures for a repeal, the legislature passed the measure again under a different name, rendering the petition meaningless.

Two companies bid for the project. The first proposal was from a group connected to a facility on a nearby island. The second was from Imperial Pacific, and it seemed too good to be true. Despite having no experience in casino operation or construction, the company offered to spend \$3 billion on a megaresort out of all proportion to Saipan's economy—Macau on the Mariana Trench.

Saipan's elected officials subjected the bids to only glancing due diligence. They hired a group of experts to scrutinize the proposals, but when one of them, a gaming executive named Shaun McCamley, found a major red flag—that people listed as consultants had not had serious discussions with the company—the government seemed untroubled. (Imperial Pacific disputed this.) In August 2014, the company won the bid in exchange for a \$15 million annual fee and other fixed payments—enough revenue to pull Saipan back from the economic brink. For the lifeline, Imperial Pacific extracted extraordinary terms: a 25-year monopoly on the casino trade and a deal to pay no gambling-specific taxes. Virtually whatever money the Chinese generated at their tables, they could keep.



▲ Chinese workers protested at the casino site last July. PHOTOGRAPHER: DAN LIN

The strongest desire among China's wealthy is to get their money—ill-gotten or otherwise—out of the country, safe from the threat of government seizure. One prevalent method for magicking money across the border, in

defiance of strict capital controls, begins with companies called junkets. They bring wealthy clients from the mainland, where gambling is illegal, to the VIP rooms of casinos in Macau. There, the junkets extend the clients credit to play baccarat, a game of luck at which they're likely to win or lose a negligible amount. At the end of play, clients cash out their balance in the currency of their choice. The debt is collected in yuan, in China. Everybody wins: The clients have converted yuan into dollars or euros or sterling, and the middlemen get a cut.

In 2011 a mother and son from Harbin, a hardscrabble city in China's northeast, became involved with a junket called Hang Seng. Cui Lijie (then about 52) and Ji Xiaobo (about 32) had grown wealthy through investments in real estate, lending, and pawnshops, and despite being newcomers to Macau, they tripled the new venture's client list in a year—from 200 high rollers to 650, according to filings. Macau gaming experts told me that Hang Seng offered far more generous credit than its competitors, making it a go-to junket for moving large amounts of capital. In 2013 the company's betting volume reached more than \$4 billion a month—easily among the largest operations in the city. But then, in 2014, China's government cracked down on the Macau laundromat, and Hang Seng's volume dropped by two-thirds. Cui had recently taken control of a company called First Natural Foods Holdings Ltd. As the action in Macau tanked, First Natural announced it was changing its name to Imperial Pacific and would seek to build a casino on Saipan.

For an American face to lead the development, the company hired Mark Brown, an Atlantic City native who'd run Donald Trump's casino empire. Brown was so revered by his Trump colleagues that some executives grew mustaches to mimic his own, and in 2004 he appeared at the future president's side on *The Apprentice*. But after Trump's company declared bankruptcy, his star fell. In 2009 he was fired from an executive role at Las Vegas Sands' Macau operations, and a subsequent move to Sydney was blocked by Australian regulators. When Imperial Pacific approached Brown in 2014, he was working at a casino in Cambodia.

Imperial Pacific also hired Shen Yan, a Chinese banker who'd held senior positions at Deutsche Bank and Credit Suisse, as president. Yan had suffered an alarming career setback in 2011—he was arrested at Hong Kong International Airport for carrying a gun in his backpack—but he had connections, including to David Paterson, the blind former governor of New York, whom Yan had once helped navigate a menu at a Shanghai luncheon. In 2015, Yan persuaded Paterson to join an Imperial Pacific advisory board and make introductions to other political figures.

Paterson delivered, demonstrating just how easy it is to get prominent American government figures to work for an opaque, year-old Chinese casino developer. He quickly got in touch with Ed Rendell, the ex-governor of Pennsylvania. “They wanted some Americans involved in case anything came up with the regulation or legalities,” Rendell told Bloomberg in a 2016 interview. “One of my assistants and I did some research on the internet.” He signed on for \$5,000 a month and persuaded Haley Barbour, the former Mississippi governor, to take the same gig. Louis Freeh, the former FBI director, also became an adviser. Eugene Sullivan, a retired military judge, and James Woolsey, the former CIA director, joined Imperial Pacific’s board of directors.

(Barbour resigned on Feb. 8 in response to questions for this article. Paterson and Rendell, who stepped down earlier, told me they had no

knowledge of improper activities by the company. Freeh, who is no longer on the advisory board, and Sullivan, who last year reduced his role from director to adviser, didn't respond to requests for comment. Brown, who left in December, declined to comment. Woolsey told me: "I have not been made aware of any issues of safety or improper relationships with politicians. If impropriety is proven, I will not be comfortable staying on the board.")

With a celebrity cast on the payroll, Imperial Pacific turned to bringing in money—immediately. Even before ground was broken at the construction site, it got permission to open a temporary casino across the street, in a duty-free mall. It was a ho-hum space, the size of a suburban Olive Garden. Yet in its first three months after opening in November 2015, VIP bets totaled \$5.3 billion, across fewer than 20 tables. That was more than a third of the action at Wynn Macau—a lush resort with 192 tables, Michelin-starred restaurants, excellent airport access, and global name recognition.

The trajectory was unprecedented, verging on impossible, or at least not legally possible. A year later a former casino worker, Danny Ewing, sued Imperial Pacific for wrongful termination. He claimed that one executive, a board member, was "allowing, if not encouraging," her workers "to submit incomplete and misleading" know-your-customer declarations, which casinos must collect to document the source of bettors' funds. Ewing also alleged that Imperial Pacific helped players structure transactions to avoid reporting requirements and that he'd been fired after he complained. (Imperial Pacific denied the allegations, and the suit was settled; in its statement, the company said it doesn't believe its betting volumes are excessive.) Imperial Pacific kept dealing in stupefying amounts of cash, and extending credit accordingly. At the end of 2016, filings show, one client alone owed it \$96 million.

If the sums were bewildering, one thing became clear: the nature of lawmakers' fact-finding trip to Macau. Torres, who became governor in 2015, claimed at the time that it was paid for by a company with no connection to the bid process, called Esteem Capital. But in early 2017, a judgment in an unrelated Hong Kong case revealed that Ji had presented himself in the past as an agent of Esteem—and that its Hong Kong address was identical to that of Imperial Pacific.

On my third night on Saipan, Yan consented to meet at a cafe in town. I didn't know what to expect of a banker-turned-casino-boss with a concealed-firearm rap, but Yan arrived looking stylishly prosperous, in a fitted T-shirt, jeans, and red slip-ons. On the condition that I not quote him, Yan agreed to lead me on a tour of the permanent casino, which had opened a couple of months before, ending the temporary site's lucrative run.

The new facility was just around the corner, towering at cartoonish scale over the tourist district's shabby low-rises—a palatial mashup of Mediterranean opulence and nautical icons. Its ivory-colored facade was festooned with gilt mermaids, dolphins, and clamshells, accented by blood-red spotlights. (Locals call the building Satan's Palace.) Yan and I passed between two brawny, trident-wielding Poseidon statues to reach the triple-height lobby, beyond which lay the clanging expanse of the main casino floor, where a rowdy Chinese clientele crowded around baccarat tables. The big money, of course, was flowing off to the side, in a series of VIP rooms. Yan took me into an empty one, as if to make a what's-the-big-fuss kind of point: traditional Chinese décor, heavy carpeting, leather chairs. VIPs themselves were off-limits. When a portly one approached, Yan abruptly handed me off to an aide and made the universal gesture for “shoo.”

To leave required navigating a maze of active construction equipment. While the casino has been welcoming high rollers since July, it's unsettlingly half-finished. The sprinkler system isn't functional, and three firefighters have to be posted inside at all times. The attached hotel, which is supposed to open later this year, is still a skeleton, and the casino basement has repeatedly flooded with sewage. In one case, according to a person who experienced it, the result was an ankle-deep sludge of human waste in a locker room.

Last May, after Imperial Pacific requested permission for its "soft opening," a special body appointed to supervise the development delivered a scathing private report to Governor Torres. According to a person who saw the document, it warned about metal debris scattered on the casino roof, which could turn into deadly projectiles in one of the typhoons that regularly batter the island; structural steel that appeared to be missing bolts; and columns with kinks that could indicate a risk of catastrophic collapse. The report urged Torres to keep the public out until Imperial Pacific could guarantee safety. But the governor rejected the advice, according to the person familiar with the report. The government later removed the supervisory body's oversight. (The governor's office told *Bloomberg Businessweek* it was assured by engineers the site was safe; Imperial Pacific said it complied with all building regulations.)

To understand Torres's willingness to accommodate Imperial Pacific, it helps to consider his family. Torres, 38, has three brothers, all lawyers at a family firm called Torres Brothers LLC. The governor worked there himself until 2008. In the first eight months of 2017, according to regulators' records, Imperial Pacific paid Torres Brothers \$126,000.

The company has also been an active acquirer of long-term land leases on Saipan. (Only native islanders can purchase land.) During my time there, I received a list of transactions that illustrates how some of the leases benefited Torres's relatives. The details are on record at the island courthouse. Imperial Pacific has operated via a blizzard of limited liability companies with generic titles. And in November 2015, one such entity bought a land lease from Torres's sister-in-law, Rowina, for \$667,000. She almost quadrupled her investment, having purchased the land about five

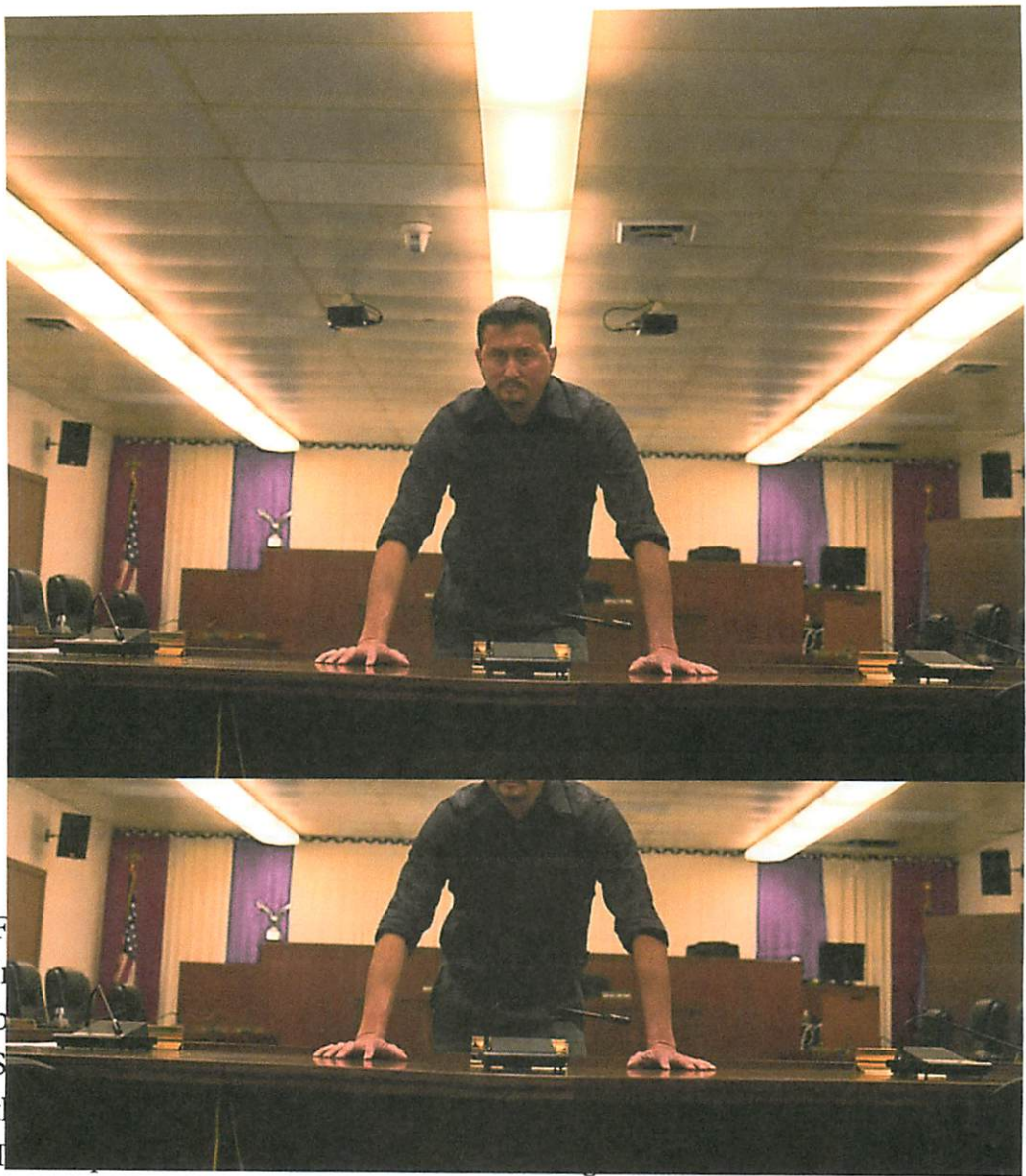
months earlier for \$180,000. The lease documents bear the signature of her husband, Torres's eldest brother, Vincent—widely considered the alpha male of the family—and that of Cai Lingli, a member of Imperial Pacific's board.

Another series of transactions, the largest worth about \$4 million, have been a windfall for a man named Serafin Camacho. The governor is first cousin to Camacho's wife, Lillian, and godfather to his adult son, Joel, who's a member of the Saipan zoning board, which will rule on Imperial Pacific's future development. Serafin's sale documents also show Cai's signature; the deals paid out immediately, even though the lease for one doesn't begin until 2042.

Imperial Pacific said its land deals were in “full compliance” with the law. Vincent Torres and Joel Camacho both said they saw nothing improper in their families' dealings with the company. The governor's office said that any implication the land deals are improper “lacks an understanding of the size” of Saipan and the governor's sprawling family. As for Imperial Pacific's choice of legal representation, Torres said he has “no involvement in [his siblings'] business transactions... and no direct financial stake in their company.”

Life is leaner outside the circle of Imperial Pacific's patronage. At the center of the island, the CNMI legislature meets in a one-story building that could pass for an elementary school. I found Representative Ed Propst's office deep inside, cramped and windowless, with a beat-up plaid couch and a narrow desk piled high with binders. “Minority,” he shrugged by way of apology. An independent, Propst is one of the most outspoken opposition members of a Republican-dominated legislature and a vociferous critic of the casino.

“I believe that Imperial Pacific runs this government,” he said. “Any legislation they've ever wanted goes their way 100 percent of the time. Not 99 percent of the time. One hundred.” Propst has tried repeatedly to impose greater scrutiny on the casino and raise its taxes, to no avail. “Where are the feds in all this?” he asked, his voice rising with exasperation.



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and a doctor advising immediate hospitalization. But someone intervened. “The injured person was not allowed to be admitted, and was promptly transported” to China.

Imperial Pacific has said that it had no knowledge of safety violations or workers being employed illegally and that both were the responsibility of its contractors. But these claims don’t withstand much scrutiny. The contractors’ office was rented by Imperial Pacific and, according to a former employee who worked there, shared with its staff. Additionally, a safety expert who worked on the construction site told me that Imperial Pacific was deeply involved with selecting and supervising contractors.

The expert described the job as one of the most challenging of his career, with widespread dangers. Generators weren’t properly grounded, workers were missing basic equipment such as safety glasses and correct footwear, and welders lacked anything like the necessary training to handle torches. Once, he said, he was forced to compress a three-hour safety briefing into

one hour. His job included ensuring compliance with U.S. regulations, and he said Imperial Pacific ignored three written pleas to stop work. (The company disputed this.) Eventually he quit.

Imperial Pacific has said it's now confident that construction workers are legally employed and that its site is complying with safety rules. Yet gruesome injuries continued after the FBI action. In late September a worker received a severe electric shock, almost losing a limb. A video of the aftermath shows him writhing on the ground next to the casino, screaming.

Although most of the undocumented workers were flown home after the FBI arrests, a group of about 35 initially refused to leave, saying they hadn't been paid as promised. I visited some of them in a dilapidated four-story apartment block where Imperial Pacific was providing housing until a deal could be reached. Zhang Chunfeng, a slim 41-year-old who wore a blue golf shirt over gray sweatpants and plastic clogs, showed me where they were sleeping: on filthy mattresses in small, bare rooms whose walls and ceilings were streaked with brown and black stains. "If the casino didn't want illegal workers," Zhang asked, "how can so many of us be here?" As he spoke, another worker jostled toward me, pulling up his T-shirt to reveal a baseball-size welt on his shoulder—the result, he said, of an on-site accident. "Why," Zhang continued, "did so many of us become victims?"

Imperial Pacific's activities in Saipan are overseen by the Commonwealth Casino Commission—a body funded by a \$3 million annual payment from the company. It holds meetings in a backroom at the public library, just past a rack of atlases. At the session I attended, questions that might otherwise be red-alert items were dispensed with briefly. The Marianas are in an active seismic zone—2016 saw a 7.7 magnitude earthquake—and one commissioner asked Imperial Pacific's representatives if they'd installed seismic bracing on the still-not-functioning sprinkler system. The answer: Only in the basement; the other floors were getting worked on. The discussion moved on after less than two minutes. Outside the door, a red flag with Imperial Pacific's logo was hanging from the ceiling.

Later, I went to the CCC's offices, inside a strip mall, to meet its executive director, Edward Deleon Guerrero—the governor's uncle and the father of his chief of staff. In a bare room kept at a chilly 62F by a wheezing air conditioner, Deleon Guerrero disputed the idea that a regulator with only one company to regulate faces an inherent conflict of interest. "If you shut down this particular operator, it doesn't mean we stop," he said. "We can probably look for another operator. ... I don't think we would lose our jobs."

Virtually none of the CCC's employees have significant experience in casino oversight, and Deleon Guerrero noted that they were making periodic trips to Las Vegas to bone up at seminars. "We're building up our own intelligence," he said. "We're tracking who these VIP players are ... we're on the lookout." His staff also monitors Imperial Pacific's "key employees," he added. Their knowledge is still incomplete. When I made a reference to Yan's arrest, an aide jotted on his legal pad: "gun charge? find out."

The last time I saw Yan, he was eager to emphasize that Imperial Pacific had bona fide amenities to offer beyond a U.S. address. We drove to two high-elevation villas that are maintained for guests. They were luxurious, in a South Beach mode: white leather sofas, contemporary chandelier, lounge chairs overlooking the Pacific. A menu listed Chinese dishes said to have aphrodisiac powers: duck with deer antler and a chicken stew containing cordyceps, a coveted fungus. Down in Saipan harbor, Yan took me aboard one of the yachts the casino makes available to elites—the 144-foot *Grand Mariana*, whose bedrooms wouldn't be out of place in a recently renovated Ritz-Carlton.

Dig deeper, and even the yachts take on an alarming sheen. In June, acting through a company called Pride Keen Ltd., Imperial Pacific hired Michael Netto, a 40-year-old Singaporean maritime consultant, to move another of its yachts from Saipan to Hong Kong. At a cafe in Singapore's financial district, Netto told me how the trip went horribly wrong. As the 121-

foot *Grand Mariana III* entered Philippine waters, it experienced mechanical trouble, and Netto slowed down to seek help. According to Philippine coast guard reports, Imperial Pacific reported the vessel stolen. “They must have thought I was trying to take it,” he told me. Soon, Philippine authorities arrived and detained him aboard the ship.

After a couple of days’ confinement, Netto said, three white men claiming to work for Pride Keen boarded the *Grand Mariana III*. Netto was in a room that allowed him to observe their movements via the ship’s surveillance cameras. He watched the men fill a brown duffel bag with bricks of U.S. dollars that, unbeknownst to him, had been hidden around the vessel. He reviewed the footage a few times to be sure. I asked Netto in a subsequent conversation if he was absolutely certain the bag was being loaded with cash. “I am very, very certain,” he replied. “I know it may be hard for you to believe, but it is what I saw.” (Imperial Pacific said the vessel was not being used to store cash and that it had been “hijacked by pirates.”)

Saipan’s citizens share a weary understanding that their home is a soft target for hucksters of all kinds—out-of-town charismatics have peddled cure-all economic schemes for decades. In a case of life imitating *The Simpsons*, someone recently tried to sell the island a monorail. All around, the relics of failed promises are being slowly reclaimed by the land. Dozens of garment factories sit abandoned, with caved-in roofs and vines climbing the walls. By the airport, the gray concrete husk of a grand, aborted hotel perches on a hillside. It’s easy to picture Imperial Pacific’s casino meeting a similar end.

For now, though, work on the resort continues, albeit at a far slower pace than before the FBI sent its undocumented workforce home. In September the company reached a deal with U.S. Customs and Border Protection to pay for private inspections of passengers it brings in on corporate jets, bypassing airport queues. Meanwhile, it’s becoming more and more difficult to see daylight between Imperial Pacific’s agenda and that of Torres’s administration. Both company and government in 2017 used the same lobbying firm: Avenue Strategies, the D.C. influence shop co-founded by former Trump adviser Corey Lewandowski. And in October a man named Changwei Xu was detained at Saipan airport because of a Nevada arrest warrant, with bail there set at \$7 million. But Imperial Pacific didn’t want him locked up. The Torres Brothers law firm quickly informed the CNMI Department of Corrections that Xu was its client and, remarkably, requested that he be released on medical grounds to house arrest, under Imperial Pacific’s supervision. The government agreed.

Toward the end of my time in Saipan, I went to see Juan Babauta, the

governor of the CNMI from 2002 to 2006, for a coffee near the casino. He spoke at first with diplomatic reserve, pausing to check who might be in earshot; Saipan is a small place, and Governor Torres is his brother-in-law, married to his wife's sister. But as our discussion went on, he grew animated and angry.

“People need to realize this place is as corrupt as it could have ever been,” Babauta said. “It’s pathetic. I’m pissed,” he continued, almost spitting out his words. “Because we are destroying a beautiful paradise.” —*With Daniela Wei*

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