

**OPINION PAGES** Send letters to PO Box 14, Majuro, MH 96960 or email [journal@ntamar.net](mailto:journal@ntamar.net)

# Is enforcement all we need?

Consideration of the proposed new VAT regulations for the Nitijela promises to be an exercise in soul wrenching. The individual members are expected to vote on the question of how much they want to pay or be deducted from their income.

In this sense, there is reassurance that a reasonable rate will have a fair chance of surviving vote casting since the new law will affect the members themselves.

To our reckoning, there are not too many currently sitting members with experience in business or filing taxes. By a cursory consideration, we find most, if not all current or former business-experienced members in a list comfortably under 10 (David Kabua, David Kramer, Alvin Jacklick, Phillip Muller, Dennis Momotaro, Brenson Wase and possibly one or two others round out the grouping). While not a majority, it is reasonable to expect that the number of members with experience will be able to provide a sensible and balanced attitude toward the critical determination of any new tax regime.

Regardless of what tax program is found suitable, one that encourages business, that is not fraught with paperwork, and can be easily explained in just a few sentences would seem to be a preferred option.

Our current tax system fits this list of requirements, but appears to suffer from lack of effective enforcement.

Could we simply keep what we have and more effectively implement it? Do we really need a whole new government department to collect a new tax?

# RMI's bright shining stars

Optimism is the word of the day as we report almost weekly a resurgence of interest in the handicraft sector of the RMI. Just as copra fell in interest through the years, so too the artful exercise of the handicraft activity fell in the estimation of too many of us. The reputation devolved into handicrafts being a poor person's alternative, an exercise in poverty-level subsistence. Handicraft making became the sister of copra making.

Now, however, a rainbow of light seems to have developed in the past several years, an appreciation of the beauty of the art of jaki ed, as well as awareness that copra will survive forever as an industry, borne on the intrinsic food value of copra.

Is the recently announced oil extracting pilot project on Namdrik cause for excitement? You bet. Namdrik is an atoll community on the cusp of regeneration. Others of us should pay close attention to the oil producing project and the jaki ed project, as well. Both income provision and desirable job security are positive trends evident in these developments. Contributors such as Maria Fowler and Dr. Irene Taafaki (jaki ed) and Senator Matt Zackhras, along with the Namdrik Local Government deserve recognition for honors-level performance.



# A base by any other name...

The commanding general for Space and Missile Defense Command (SMDC) Lt. General Formica and Col. Boehm both noted a slight misrepresentation in a recent Journal article on the changes in USAKA's command structure. I would like to clarify the situation to explain how the command is reorganizing to provide better capability to the mission and in partnership with the Marshallese people and government:

The Army's footprint on Kwajalein Atoll will still overall be referred to as United States Army Kwajalein Atoll (USAKA). In this, LTG Formica, Commanding General for of the U.S.

Army Space and Missile Defense Command/Army Strategic Command (SMDC/ARSTRAT) based in Huntsville, Alabama, will remain the Senior Commander. Within USAKA, Reagan Test Site (RTS) will remain but we are standing up a separate subelement, United States Army Garrison — Kwajalein Atoll (USAG-KA) that will focus on the base operations/garrison mission. Col. Boehm will remain the senior on-island officer in charge of USAKA, but he will also assume command duties as the USAG-KA Garrison Commander. USAG-KA will be overseen by US Army Installation Management Command (IMCOM),

Pacific based in Honolulu and its higher headquarters, the United States Army Installation Management Command based in San Antonio, Texas. Thus, there are two parts to make up the complete command here, RTS and USAG-KA.

Basically, USAKA still exists overall but it is now divided into two local commands (USAG-KA and RTS) where RTS is directly commanded by SMDC/ARSTRAT and USAG-KA still falls under the senior command of SMDC/ARSTRAT, but will be overseen and managed by IMCOM.

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# The Marshall Islands Journal

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