

TITLE 1:
GENERAL PROVISIONS

§ 429. Saipan: Airport: Francisco C. Ada/Saipan International Airport.

The Saipan International Airport is hereby named the “Francisco C. Ada/Saipan International Airport.”

Source: Saipan LL 13-10, § 2.

Commission Comment: Saipan LL 13-10 became effective October 14, 2002 and contained findings and purpose, consultation, authorization, severability, and savings clause provisions. According to LL 13-10:

Section 1. Findings and Purpose. The Legislature finds that as District Administrator, the Commonwealth’s first Lieutenant Governor Francisco Castro Ada pioneered the development of the Saipan International Airport. In the recent commemorative ceremony marking the 25th year of the Saipan International Airport, he was acknowledged by Herman Bliss of the Federal Aviation Administration as “the quiet man and catalyst in keeping the local momentum going during those early days.” The completion of the Saipan International Airport launched a new age in Saipan’s economic development attracting the services of major airline carriers.

In 1971, under his leadership, Mr. Ada seized the opportunity to transform the then Mariana Islands District, Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands, into a major Pacific Island tourism destination when the district became eligible to apply for a matching grant for airport development and improvement under the National [A]irport Airways Development Act. Undaunted by the requirement that local governments must put up one fourth of the cost and fortified by the strong support of the airlines, the local tourism industry, and the Mariana Islands District Legislature, Mr. Ada heeded the advice of Leigh Fisher, a prominent airport financing consultant who recommended that, while the Marianas district had no money, it could raise the needed funds through a bid of the prime concession at the airport and by requiring the successful bidder to pay an advanced fee. Drawn by the business prospect of the airport’s prime concession, international corporation Duty Free Shoppers Limited placed a successful bid of \$5 million which then became the district government’s matching fund.

Mr. Ada spearheaded the formation of the Airline Technical Committee, composed principally of Continental Air Micronesia [sic] and Japan Airlines and officials of the Mariana Islands District Government to oversee the airport project. Upon the selection of Isley Field as the site of the new airport, the committee, which was essentially a partnership between the government and private sectors, worked on the design of the terminal buildings. With the committee’s instruction that the terminal buildings must be of island motif, the sweeping rooflines of terminal buildings were drawn and constructed becoming an enduring architectural feature which has influenced subsequent expansion of the

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airport. In 1972, construction at Isley Field began in earnest and the new Saipan International Airport was officially completed in 1975.

Along with the physical structure of the airport, Mr. Ada was also pivotal in the establishment of the Mariana Islands Airport Authority (“MIAA”), the predecessor of the Commonwealth Ports Authority. Testifying before the Congress of Micronesia on the bill to create MIAA, District Administrator Ada called the authority “an integral and inseparable part of the Saipan International Airport,” to be directly responsible for administering and managing the airport and to be self-supporting by earmarking for its operation and maintenance all the revenue to be generated from the airport. Established as a public corporation, the financing of the MIAA was considered at the time to be bold and innovative, an approach Mr. Ada used to free up the district’s budget for other capital improvement projects.