

# U.S. to Desalt

By John G. Norris  
Staff Reporter

The Defense Department announced yesterday that it will build a big water desalting plant at the Guantanamo Naval Station—on a "crash" basis—to give it "an adequate and permanent on-base source of water."

At the same time, the Department announced that some of the U.S. base's Cuban workers are being fired.

Pentagon officials gave no details of either the number of Cubans being discharged, or of the plant to convert seawater into fresh water. But a special Navy board just re-

turned from Guantanamo was reported to be considering cutting the number of people at the base to the bare minimum, thus reducing the \$4.4 to \$5 million in dollar exchange now pouring in Communist Cuba coffers annually from the Guantanamo payroll.

A board headed by Rear Adm. John L. Chew of the joint staff of the Joint Chiefs of Staff returned from a quick weekend trip to the base aware of the fact that it will cost additional money to make the naval base self-sufficient and to replace many of the 3000-odd Cuban workers from Guantanamo.

The desalinization plant will cost upwards of \$5 million to build and 50 cents per 100,000 gallons of water to operate, compared to 22½ cents paid to Cuba for raw water prior to the shutoff of the Cuban supply last week. If a plant is built big enough to produce 2 million gallons of water a day—normal consumption—operating costs would run \$365,000 a year.

However, it is expected that the base will be kept on water rationing indefinitely. This would not be the current austere water hours, but probably about half normal output or 1 million gallons daily.

As for replacing the Cuban workers, it would about double the payroll to bring in U.S. workers. A GS-3 worker from the states, for example, is paid \$3,880 a year, plus a 10 percent cost of living differential, compared to \$2,017 for a Cuban or other alien of the same grade and skill.

There now are more than 3,000 Jamaicans and other non-Cuban aliens working at Guantanamo and perhaps this total could be increased, particularly in unskilled labor. But many of the Cubans are highly skilled workers with earned U.S. Civil Service equities.

The initial discharges are

said to be non-essential workers who can be most easily spared. An alternative to replacing others with U.S. citizens is to transfer some of the Fleet training work from Guantanamo to the U.S. Naval Base at Roosevelt Roads, Puerto Rico, or to bases in the States.

But this would require construction of some additional facilities, particularly in Puerto Rico. Poor weather handicaps training in U. S. waters, while Guantanamo and the Caribbean are ideal for training.

Meanwhile, austere rationing, limiting water consumption to 500,000 gallons a day, continued at Guantanamo. Two harbor water craft have started bringing in 500,000 gallons of water daily from Jamaica, while two big tankers are being readied to haul water from Florida. A third tanker, the Chepatchet, now at Jacksonville, also is expected to be used to assure the base adequate water until the plant is built.

# Water at Guantanamo



United Press International

## *Panama Students Demonstrate*

Panamanian students hanged in effigy Manuel Trucco, Chilean ambassador to the OAS, during a demonstration in Panama City Sunday. The more than 2000 demonstrators, commemorating the passing of one month since the outbreak of

violence against United States operation of the Panama Canal, also "hanged" U.S. Gen. Andrew O'Meara and Guillermo Arango, former Panamanian Ambassador to the U.S. Canal Zone but were turned back by National Guardsmen.