



Guam Soil & Water Conservation

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August 13, 2007

The Honorable Donna M. Christensen
Chairwoman
Subcommittee on Insular Affairs
U.S. House of Representatives
1337 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chairwoman Christensen:

On behalf of the Guam Soil & Water Conservation Districts, thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on the significant issue of the, “U.S. Military buildup on Guam and Challenges Facing the Community.” We are very appreciate of the time that you and the members of your Subcommittee on Insular Affairs have taken to travel to Guam and hear first hand the issues and concerns of our people with regard to the proposed military buildup on our island.

As members of the Guam Soil and Water Conservation Districts we are identified as an organization that primarily deals with farming related issues. However, a significant part of our mandate is focused on conservation and resource management related issues. The Northern & Southern Soil & Water Conservation Districts on Guam partner with Government of Guam Departments such as the Department of Agriculture, Guam Environmental Protection Agency, Bureau of Statistics and Plans, Department of Land Management, Department of Public Works and the University of Guam. As Districts, we also maintain partnerships with the U.S. Department of Agriculture, the Natural Resource and Conservation Service and the Farm Service Agency.

There are a number of issues that are of primary concern to the Districts with regard to the proposed military buildup here on Guam. The most critical issue is directly related to our island’s water resources. The Districts are well aware that the proposed military buildup will significantly increase the islands population and have an impact on the water resources that are available on island. Currently there are a number of infrastructure related issues that must be addressed in order to provide a consistent and accessible supply of water to the island’s farming community. Of particular concern is the accessibility and supply of water that is currently available to farmers for irrigation and livestock in northern Guam. The preliminary information

that has been provided to the community indicates that the proposed buildup will be focused in northern Guam. This is the very area that has the largest population of island residents and has the greatest impact on the use of the northern aquifer. The issue of accessibility to water resources must be taken into primary consideration as one of the most critical issues to be address. An assessment of the volume of water that is available, the proper management of the northern aquifer and the distribution of our precious water resources is a critical concern to the local farming community and island residents. The current water infrastructure limitations in the northern part of the island have limited the ability of farmers to expand and consistently maintain crop operations. The Districts are recommending that in order to insure compatible development between the military and the local community, the distribution infrastructure, water resource management and the accessibility to water must be a top priority.

This same concern also applies to southern Guam. The Navy provides water to a number of residential households and farms in the southern part of the island. The Districts are concerned about the impacts increased demand for water use for the military will have on the availability of water for southern residents and farmers. The Navy currently provides water from the Fena Reservoir that is located on military property. We have experienced in the past, especially during the dry season of the year, a decrease in the amount of water that is provided by the Navy to the local community. We are aware that the military prioritizes water use for its operations before water is distributed to island residents. However, this issue needs to be further examined and addressed to minimize adverse impacts to our local people who are dependent on this essential water source.

The Districts are also recommending that the military consider in its buildup plans the recycling of wastewater that can be converted as a source for irrigation. If new wastewater plants are to be constructed to handle the increased military population, the current practice of wastewater treatment and discharge into the ocean only further depletes reusable water resources. The Districts would like to see a more integrated approach for the development and management of water and wastewater resources that will take into mutual consideration the impacts and benefits to both the military and the local community.

Another key issue that is of primary interest to the Districts is the access of locally grown farm products to the military community. The Districts want to be included in direct dialogue with the military community concerning our interest in providing fresh local produce for military consumption. The Districts are of the position that the local economy can be further stimulated and directly benefit from the military investment as a customer of locally grown products. There are mutual benefits that can be gained by both the military and the farming community through a cooperative partnership. The Districts would also like to work with the military to further address the issue of food security and the ability to provide food commodities that can be

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produced on island. With our distance from major shipping ports, it is in our mutual interest to increase local food production to provide for both the civilian and military population.

The Districts are also recommending that the military buildup address the issue of alternative types of renewable energy generation such as bio energy, ocean wave energy, wind power and other sources of renewable energy as part of its buildup operations. We are aware that the military is already pursuing alternative energy infrastructure at other base operations in the mainland. We would like to see the military integrate alternative energy models into their buildup operations in Guam.

As new infrastructure developments are put in place the Districts would like to see greater consideration being placed on environmentally compatible development. The Guam Soil & Water Conservation Districts are interested in partnering with the military to address the development of their conservation plan to address the military expansion plans for Guam. During the National Association of Conservation Districts Meeting just recently held in Washington D.C. in July, we shared our concerns with our fellow District members across the nation of the potential impacts such a significant military buildup will have on our small island. Our National President, Olin Sims further shared our concerns on July 24, 2007 in a meeting with representatives at the Pentagon to encourage a greater partnership between the military and the Conservation Districts. In the area of conservation, we would like to move forward with a progressive partnership with the military.

It is very important to remember that the impact of the proposed military buildup is not limited to behind the fence base operations. This major military buildup that is proposed to occur on Guam in such a short time span will have significant impact on the lives of our people. As members of the Guam Soil & Water Conservation Districts we want to insure that the critical concerns of our people, particularly with regards to conservation issues, are addressed and prioritized in the planning and implementation of the U.S. military buildup on Guam.

Thank you again for providing the Guam Soil & Water Conservation Districts the opportunity to provide testimony on this very important issue.

Sincerely,

Benny P. San Nicolas
Chairman
Southern Soil & Water Conservation District