

## **Joint Region Marianas Change of Command**

**July 2012**

Acting Governor Tenorio, Former Governor and First Lady Felix and Joann Camacho, Palau Senate President Mlib Temtuchi; Senators of the Guam legislature; Acting Guam Supreme Court Chief Justice Torres; Ambassador Reed-Rowe; Ambassador Quinn; members of the consular corps; Guam mayors and Saipan mayor Tudela; Admirals French, Brown, Cloyd, and Payne; General Paulino; members of the Guam chamber of commerce, armed forces committee, and navy league; commanding officers; ladies and gentlemen; family and friends; Good morning. Thank you for coming. I am honored and humbled by your presence. Admiral French. Thank you for making the long trip out here from Washington, DC.

As I was preparing for this day, I was looking back on the last two and-a-half years on Guam, trying to decide what to talk about. One thing I recognized is that I have given a lot of speeches during this assignment. Somewhere beyond sixty or

so. That's just the ones that I have a copy of. Tilghman, I might have forgotten to mention how much you will likely be out in the community, talking. But in general, when someone asked me to speak at some event or talk to their group, I would agree, if my schedule supported it, and then I would try to figure out something useful to say. Often it was trying to give some historical perspective. Other times it was just giving my perspective on how things were going, but as a matter of personal pride, I tried not to give any fluff speeches.

So as I prepared for today, I had a few options. One is to talk about all of the things I did on this tour, both personal and professional, how much I enjoyed it, and say goodbye. Not very interesting. Another is to thank every person that I've had contact with over the tour, and that can certainly fill the time, but it is pretty boring. I think we have all attended some of those changes of command.

So I choose to talk history and my perspective. Now I would ask somebody to keep an eye on Matt Knight, my public affairs

officer. He is probably right at the edge of distress over this. He asked me about a month ago what I needed with respect to a speech, and I told him I didn't need any assistance. I was just going to get up and tell everybody what I thought, and he hasn't slept well since.

Guam has played a unique strategic role in the Pacific for over 100 years and will continue to play a strategic role for the foreseeable future. In January, President Obama released the "emerging defense strategy", which explicitly states that the number one priority with regard to regions is the Pacific. This was based on the recognition that, for the United States to remain a great power, able to influence world events to our advantage and in support of our core values, we must get our fiscal house in order. To do this, we must get our economy going, and the key to that is the Asia-Pacific, where the three largest economies of the world come together and the majority of rapidly growing economies exist. Just a glance at a globe immediately tells you that Guam is a big part of our Asia-Pacific strategy. Governor

Calvo says it best when he tells visitors that “Guam is America in Asia.”

Guam was obtained by the United States as a result of the Spanish American War of 1898. For many years it was used as a coaling station allowing the U.S. to fuel ships transiting the Pacific. It was also host to a transpacific cable station in the early 1900s connecting the U.S. to the far reaches of the Pacific, and PanAmerican Airways used Sumay as a seaport for its flying boats in the 1930s. The United States of America never made Guam a colony and only put enough resources into Guam to make it stable. It never stripped any resources from Guam, the most obvious sign of any colonization effort. Any of the current talk of the U.S. colonization of Guam or meetings of the Decolonization Committee is insulting to those of us who serve in the United States military and who would willingly give our lives in the defense of Guam and its citizens, all fully American citizens.

Guam was captured and occupied by the Japanese for 2-1/2 years in World War II and liberated by United States Marines on 21 July 1944. This year we commemorated the 68th anniversary of Liberation Day. The battle was very intense with significant

casualties. The intensity of the battle is often lost in the fog of history and the mixing of the Liberation of Guam with Saipan, Tinian, the invasion of Peleliu, and the landings on Normandy in Europe, all going on at the same time. Almost twice as many Marines were killed or wounded during the liberation of Guam as were lost or wounded on Guadalcanal. I actually had a United States Senator, who was passing through Andersen Air Force Base on the way to further points in Asia, ask me if there had been a battle on Guam in World War II. We need to understand the history.

After the liberation of Guam in 1944 was when the Navy came in really big and made Guam the island that the SeaBees built. With many battalions of SeaBees, they built the breakwater that provides shelter for the outer harbor, dredged the inner harbor from swamp land, built Polaris point and Dry Dock Island, the commercial port, the power system, the roads, the airports, the water system to include Fena reservoir, and the wastewater system.

That was also when Nimitz Hill, where we are today, was developed and established as the site of the Commander, Pacific Operations Areas, Admiral Nimitz' forward headquarters. I have aerial pictures from 1944 that show flag circle drive and the seven flag houses in their same footprint as today. A horseshoe pit for Admiral Nimitz is also visible. As far as you could see back toward the current headquarters building, which was the site of Admiral Nimitz' headquarters, were Quonset huts, barracks, staff buildings, tents, and logistics sites. This hill was the location from which the Pacific campaign was run following the liberation of Guam, to include the landings on Iwo Jima and Okinawa, and the huge naval battle of Leyte Gulf. At the end of World War II, there were 225,000 active duty military on Guam, and we controlled over 60 percent of the island.

Other than during the Japanese occupation, the island was under military governorship, specifically a Navy governor, my ancestor, from 1898 to 1950, when oversight of the island was shifted from the Department of the Navy to the Department of the

Interior. An Organic Act organizing the government of Guam was passed by the US Congress in 1950, and the first locally elected governor took office in 1970. All of this was as a result of the Guam legislature which unanimously voted to send a representative to Washington, DC with tasking to stay there until an act was passed which bestowed U.S. citizenship to the residents of Guam and established a locally elected government. I must admit it puzzles me when I hear the current talk of “self determination” since, by my reading of history, that self determination was made 65 years ago.

I go into all of this to give some background to the sometime expressed opinion that the importance of Guam to the United States is one-sided, driven solely by what the military wants out of it. There have been quite a few cases where the military needed the strategic location and capabilities of Guam and built up rapidly only to fairly rapidly draw back down and walk away once the crisis passed. Examples include World War II, the Vietnam War, and then in the late 1990s, as we were trying to reap the "peace

dividend" by drawing down overseas bases and forces, several installations on Guam were closed and the military drew down to its lowest level since World War II.

Then some wise people in DC looked at a globe, looked at United States' trade numbers, looked at where our key alliances are, looked at where our security challenges are, and realized that the Pacific is it, and that Guam is key to our posture in the Pacific. Not just nice to have, but the linchpin of our security strategy in the Pacific. Strategically located... United States sovereign territory... very impressive port and airfield capabilities... and significant logistics capabilities. The answer was obvious.

The last two years have been full of debate on what the military on Guam will look like in the years to come. At times the rhetoric has made it seem that that it was an us vs. them mentality with the military working against the Guam community. Now, when I look around I don't see a Navy community separate from the Guam community. I see that the vast majority of Navy civilian employees, whether working for the Base, NAVFAC, or

Region, are locals, serving their nation as Navy civilians.

I see a very large number of locals who have served careers in the military, retired, and returned home to Guam to live and continue to serve in their local villages. I see large numbers of active duty military doing voluntary multiple tours in Guam, and I see a significant number of service members retire and stay in Guam. To me, active duty members asking for multiple tours in Guam and retirees setting up residence here means that the military is part of the community! Guam is our community, too.

Now the Marine Corps relocation is delayed, but it will come. It will be smaller and will take longer than the original plan, but it will have less impact off of the bases. However, there will also be less economic stimulus off of the bases.

We are still figuring and studying on locations, laydowns, and methods. Guam has the rare chance for a mulligan. For those of you that don't play golf or recognize the term, a mulligan is a free turn or ball in golf that you can play when you completely shank a shot. You get to say, my bad. I messed that up. Let me

try that again. And that is where we are with the buildup.

Over this tour, I participated in several of the meetings between senior Washington, DC officials and local officials. A consistent theme was that the DC officials kept coming out here to hear what the locals had to say, were always told the same thing (we want a smaller buildup, a slower buildup, and stay within your existing footprint), but nothing ever happened with that.

Well, now there has been a change in plan, fully in line with the requests of the local officials. 4700 Marines, only 1600 of them permanent party with families (assuming they have families). The others will be rotational. We are relooking at ways to fit them fully within our current footprint.

But here's the rub. If we fit everything within our current footprint, there won't be much benefit for the local economy or the local population. For example, we roll SeaBee battalions (or parts of them) through here regularly. Andersen Air Force Base has a continuous bomber presence and many refueling aircraft and all of their crews on Andersen. You just don't get a huge lift to the

economy. In fact, you don't even notice them.

The Marines have a need for a world class training range. Training in the Pacific with our Allies and partners will only grow in line with our emerging defense strategy. We could probably fit them at the Naval Magazine by bulldozing mountains along with real historical and archeological sites. Or we could jam them into disparate sites on the west side of the island with danger zones that impede water sports and fishing. But that is not ideal for the Marines or Guam.

And here is the real rub. The Government of Guam, which by the way owned 48 percent of this island, (and I have to ask you, what is THAT doing for you) has low value land with no utilities and no services, which would be an ideal location for a range. The Navy, on the other hand, now owns 27 percent of the island and is fully committed to owning less land when this buildup is completed, has high value, developed land, some of which has fully functional housing which could be part of our "net negative" commitment.

So here's where we are, in my opinion. Before we spend another three years in studying the options for Marine Corps siting, it is time for Guam leadership to step up and lead. Time to tee up your mulligan and get this buildup back on track to the benefit of the island and the people of Guam.

Well, it is time for me to wrap this up. I have probably gone on for too long, but you have probably sensed that I have a few opinions on these things and that I care very deeply about Guam. Dona and I have truly been blessed throughout our four-and-a-half years on Guam, spread over two tours. We will miss Guam and we will miss our many friends from Guam. Thank you for making our time here so enjoyable.

Tilghman, congratulations on coming to a great job. I guarantee that you will love it here and that the people of Guam will welcome and embrace you and your family as one of their own, just like they did us.

I will now read my orders:

From: Chief of Naval Operations

Subject: Change of Duty Orders for Vice Admiral Paul J. Bushong

When directed by reporting senior detach as Commander Joint

Region Marianas and U.S. Pacific Command Representative

Guam/ Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands/

Federated States of Micronesia/ and Republic of Palau and report

to the State Department for duty in Jerusalem as the United

States Security Coordinator for Israel and the Palestinian

Authority.

Admiral Payne, I am ready to be relieved.