



200th Council Meeting

Guam Council Members Island Reports

Guam Vice Chair Member Judith Guthertz

In response to an Action Memo from the 199th Council meeting held in June to analyze the impacts of the military buildup to fisheries and fishing community in Guam, I worked with staff and facilitated a working group meeting in early August that included the advisory panel, DAWR, Council family members, NOAA Fisheries, the public and representatives from Camp Blaz and Joint Region Marianas (JRM). Manny Dueñas joined.

In that meeting, we discovered the military has not budgeted for nor do they have any plans to accommodate the population increase by expanding their Sumay Cove Marina located in Big Navy. They also do not have any plans in place to mitigate the expected impact of the buildup by funding expansion and improvements to civilian marinas and docks.



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The military buildup in Guam is moving forward at breakneck speed. Living quarters, support facilities, training grounds, and firing ranges are nearing completion. I told those in the meeting the military should publish a timeline of when exercises will take place. It is very important due to closure plans for fishing activities. Fishermen need to know when they can fish and when they cannot. The AP requested for and was approved for a private, guided tour of the ranges. Date TBA.

Though a total of 5,000 Marines and 1,300 of their dependents are expected to start arriving in Guam as part of the relocation of troops from Okinawa to Marine Corps Base Camp Blaz, only a small number will start to touch down in 2024, according to Camp Blaz spokesperson Maj. Diann Rosenfeld.

The “military population” in Guam is expected to grow by 2,500 people over the next two years, and then gradually increase by another 15,500 people by 2037, according to information from JRM.

But that increase is not just in the number of active-duty military personnel but will also include civilians working for the Department of Defense, reservists, National Guard personnel, and their dependents, JRM said.

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In all, the “military population” would grow from the current 26,000 to 44,000 by 2037. That’s an average of 1,384 increase every year for the next 13 years per JRM spokesperson Lt. Cmdr. Katie Koenig. Currently, the “military population” is at about 26,000 people, and will climb to about 34,500 by 2028, she said.

Civilian support for service members will fluctuate, based on military footprint, construction, and mission requirements. This will forever change the community and the landscape of Guam as we know it today.

As of August 2024, four of the planned five live firing ranges have been completed and are awaiting completion of the permitting process. There will also be a grenade range. The Marines are allowed 39 shooting weeks per year. And although they have sophisticated surface radar and cameras to monitor the Surface Danger Zone (SDZ) beyond the ranges, the military representatives at the meeting admitted they have not taken full advantage of communication options to convey buildup and training information to the community and do not have vessels to warn incursions. The ranges will shut down if boats are observed entering the SDZ.

No SDZ perimeter buoys will be placed around the SDZ. They will have the FAD effect and attract fish which will attract fishermen.

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JRM's Mark Cruz said there could be mitigation measures like having the military fund FADs to reduce fuel costs, but a formal plan needs to be drafted showing how it could benefit the community, fishing seasons, and more. The Civilian Military Coordination Council can address this when brought up.

There were several recommendations on how best to communicate live fire training dates, or when the ranges are active, such as installation of flags at the marinas with color codes, flags on the ridge and on the shoreline, beacons during the day and night, and increase the Notice to Mariners advisories. Others recommended having the military pay for the installation of a launch ramp on the east side, fund enhancement programs to develop fisheries, and fund training of residents to advance their capacities in fisheries.

The science center's Justin Hospital reported data from surveys done with fishers show a significant issue with the fishing community. 55% of fishers indicated their fishing activity or 20% of trips were affected by the military buildup.

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When I was a senator in the Guam Legislature, I worked with my fellow senators to create a Military Buildup Committee and served as Chair for many years. The committee worked with General Vance who indicated the military does not need any more land from the Government of Guam or from the civilian community. Later, this position was reversed and wanted to acquire property to build the firing range in Pagat, the east side of Guam. The community fought it and so they backed away. They did not have community consultation; not enough research was done and now the Jinapsan issue was resurrected.

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Ritidian Point with Northwest Field,
Andersen Air Force Base and Camp Blaz

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Marine Corps Base Camp Blaz under construction

Guam Vice Chair Member Judith Guthertz

The AP is actively pursuing mitigation measures with Joint Region Marianas to find ways to ensure the Guam fishing community is accommodated. It makes for a better partnership in good faith into the future.



Sumay Cove Recreational Marina, Big Navy

Guam Council Member Frank Perez

Hafa Adai!

I would like to piggyback on Judi's report regarding the military buildup and how it will impact the Guam fishing community. Perhaps in a big way.

The civilian marinas in Agat and Agaña will see an exponential increase in usage with the arrival of the Marines, their dependents, support personnel, and contractors. With them will come boats and desire to fish our warm tropical waters.

More than 800 boats and jet skis are already registered in Guam each year. Although not all go on the water on any given day, on weekends the already limited trailer parking is filled to capacity, boaters trying to launch or recover their boats must cue for a long time, and it is very rare to alone at prime fishing grounds at Rota Banks, Galvez Banks, or at the FAD buoys. The arrival of more boats will add to this congestion.

On the positive side, there will be an anticipated increase in charters for fishing, sunset cruise, dolphin watching and diving and these will help the economy a bit.

Guam Council Member Frank Perez

As a retired military, I hope to champion this cause and work with the AP and the fishing community to find a common group with the military so all will be happy.

I look forward to working with the Guam Council family and the Council team in addressing this and other issues under the Council's purview.



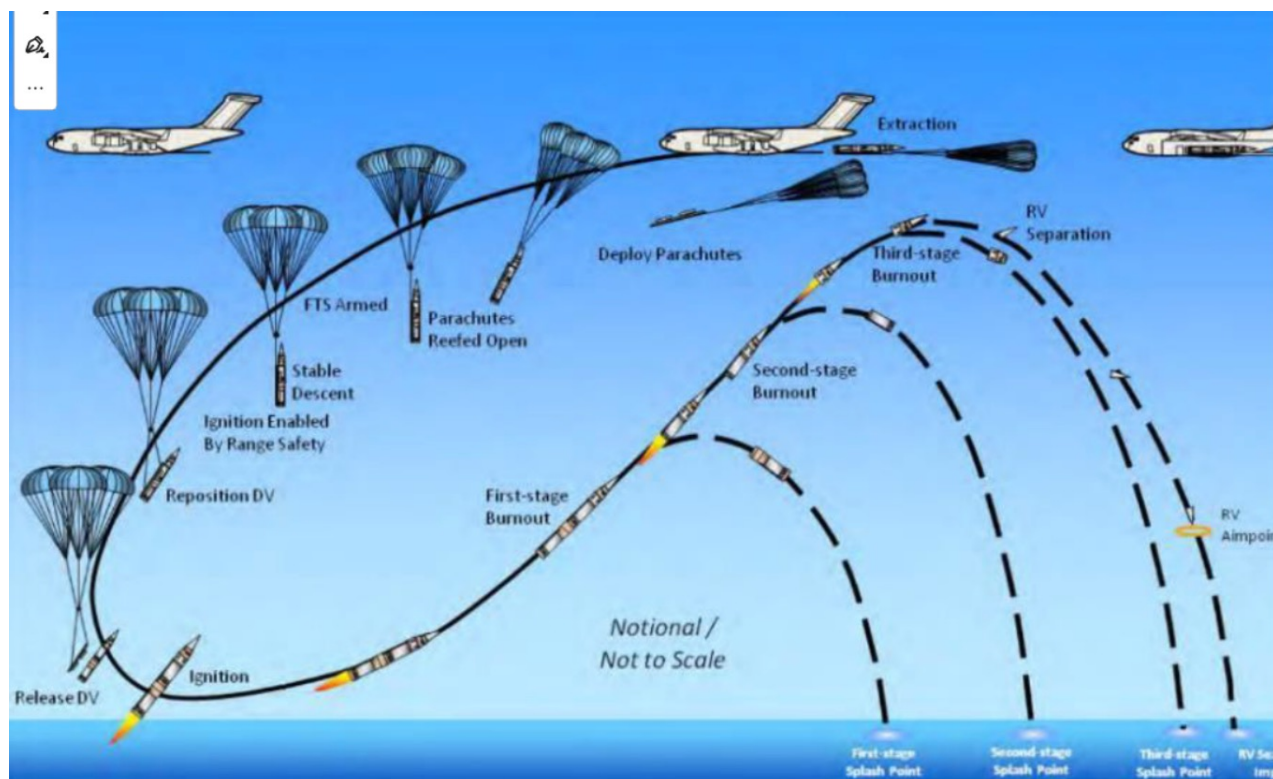
Agat Marina



Agaña Marina

Guam Council Member Frank Perez

The Missile Defense Agency (MDA) is also proposing to deploy, test and conduct up to two flight tests or tracking exercises per year over a 10-year period. The test will include a target missile, an interceptor missile flight, an intercept of the target missile, and test of sensors. A tracking exercise involves using sensors to scan and track a target with no interceptors. The exercise will use existing military property but will impact those below the cliff line at Andersen Air Force Base. MDA will pay for lodging for affected landowners for the duration of the exercise and those not willing to leave the area will have to sign a waiver. The first test is December 2024.



Guam Council Member Frank Perez

With the closure of the Guam Fishermen's Coop due to damage caused by Typhoon Mawar in May 2023, and the effects of COVID-19 with operations, the annual GFCA Fishing Derby was again not held this year. Instead, the Greg D. Perez Foundation, namesake of the world record blue marlin caught off Guam in 1969, hosted its 4th Annual Greg D. Perez International Sportfishing Derby on August 17 and 18. For the first time in Guam, catch standings can be accessed near real time via a website.

The heaviest blue marlin caught was 167.4 pounds, yellowfin at 47.2 pounds, wahoo at 31.9 pounds. The only mahimahi caught was 4.6 pounds and the heaviest bonita was at 17.4 pounds. Fishermen were thrown off by the severe hot weather leading up to the event date followed by heavy rains and winds over the derby weekend. 84 boats participated over the two-day event.



Small but many hookups

Ambros, Inc., the Budweiser distributor in Guam and in American Samoa, celebrated their 75th anniversary by hosting a one-time fishing derby. Held on Saturday, September 14, the 75th Ambros Inc. Fishing Tournament capped at 100 boats with up to \$50,000 in prizes. For the first time in Guam, only the Agaña Marina was used. Kapena was the featured entertainment.

Updates with derby results will be posted later)

Un Dangkulu na Si Yu'us Ma'ase