

Thank you, Chairman Bishop and Ranking Member Grijalva, for placing H.R. 1103, the American Memorial Park Tinian Annex Act, on the Subcommittee's agenda today. My bill provides an opportunity for the preservation and interpretation of one of the most significant sites in the military history of our nation – but in a way that respects the fiscal constraints our nation faces.

Let me briefly take you back to 1944, when the island of Tinian in the Northern Marianas was thrust into world history by World War II. The 4th Marine Division [took Tinian from the Japanese](#) in just nine days. But even before fighting ended, the Seabees began work on the strategic goal of the invasion: creation of a vast air base, North Field. The largest of its day. Four huge runways. 50,000 personnel. This is where B-29 Superfortresses were launched for the bombing campaign against the Japanese homeland, and where the Enola Gay and Bock's Car took off with the atomic bombs that ended the war.

I should mention that both these planes trained and departed for the Marianas from Wendover Field, Utah, which I believe is in the Chairman's district.

With the end of the war North Field was soon abandoned, its runways returned to jungle.

People on Tinian, however, recognized the significance of what had occurred on their island and the need to protect what remained. They were successful at having North Field designated as a National Historical Landmark and listed on the National Register of Historic Places. At their urging a National Park Service survey was conducted to look at creation of a park. That study confirmed the national significance of Tinian. But because of the 100-year lease, held by the Defense Department on North Field and two-thirds of the rest of Tinian, the study concluded it was not feasible to establish a park on the island.

It might be acceptable to allow Tinian's historical assets to lie safely, undisturbed where they are – except for one thing: the U.S. military has renewed interest in using its leasehold. Just this week 200 Marines arrived for Geiger Fury, a training exercise in quickly establishing a remote airfield. The Marines are welcome and increased use of the leasehold could do much for the Tinian's struggling economy. But military training will involve earthmoving and other construction. Training will include live fire. These activities put historic artifacts at risk.

So the time has come to establish a repository and curatorial facility – and a location for interpretive activities. That is

the purpose of H.R. 1103.

In order to accomplish this with limited cost to the federal government H.R. 1103 requires the Northern Marianas government to provide public land – outside of the leasehold, precluding conflict with military activities.

H.R. 1103 also caps costs by building on the existing National Park Service management structure at the American Memorial Park on the neighbor island of Saipan. Park Service personnel at American Memorial Park already provide some interpretive materials for visitors to Tinian. H.R. 1103 formalizes that arrangement by designating the Tinian facility as an annex of the existing park.

In addition, H.R. 1103 anticipates a Department of Defense role. DOD has already said it will seek funding and transfer it to the “federal agency with authority” to establish a curatorial and historic interpretive center. H.R. 1103 makes clear that the National Park Service would be that agency.

As you can see, it is the intent of H.R. 1103 to protect historical assets, but to do so by pooling the resources of various stakeholders rather than seeking a blank check.

Let me close by reiterating the support of the people of

Tinian for the Annex and protection of historical resources on their island. Chairman, I would like to add to the record four items: Northern Marianas Senate Resolution 17-37, supporting the annex; and letters of support from Senators Jude Hofschneider and Francisco Cruz, who represent Tinian; Mr. Wayne Baumunk, a Vietnam veteran; and Mr. Phillip Mendiola-Long of the Tinian Chamber of Commerce.

Thank you for your time.

I ask that my colleagues support H.R. 1103, the American Memorial Park Annex in Tinian Act.