

Committee on Resources

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The Honorable Kaleo S. Moylan
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Testimony
Before the Committee on Resources
United States House of Representatives

Oversight Hearing on the
Guam War Claims Review Commission Report

Wednesday, July 21, 2004
60th Anniversary of the Liberation of Guam

Chairman Richard Pombo, Congresswoman Madeleine Bordallo and Members of the House Committee on Resources:

Good Afternoon and Hafa Adai.

For the Committee record, I am Kaleo S. Moylan, Lieutenant Governor of Guam. I'm appearing before the Committee representing the Government and the people of Guam. Governor Felix Camacho extends his regrets that he is unable to attend. I kindly request that his written testimony which was previously submitted be officially entered into the record.

At the outset, let me extend my sincere thanks to you, Mr. Chairman, for holding these proceedings today, July 21st, 2004. It is most appropriate and befitting that we discuss the Guam War Claims Review Commission Report, on this very day that marks the 60th Anniversary of Guam's liberation from Japanese occupation by American forces.

In fact, 20 hours ago, commencing at 8:26 AM, Chamorro Standard Time, a beach landing reenactment and wreath laying ceremony took place in Guam, recalling the assault landing at Asan Beach by Marines who launched the liberation of the island. More than 55,000 Marines from the 3rd Division and soldiers from the 77th Army Infantry Division, stormed the shores of Guam this day 60 years ago. 1,800 American lives were lost during that assault at Asan alone and by the time the island was secured, there were more than 7,000 American casualties.

Mr. Chairman, by virtue of today's hearing, you have given the people of Guam the highest honor by extending the commemoration of Guam's Liberation to the halls of our nation's capitol. There is no greater tribute than what you have given us today by remembering the sacrifices of many great Americans and the loyalty of the Chamorro people to the United States. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, for making this hearing possible on Guam's 60th Liberation Day.

We often speak of America's greatest generation, the men and women, the heroes, the fallen, those who fought or participated in some way during World War II. In fact, the World War II Memorial was dedicated a few months ago here in Washington, DC, honoring those who fought and those who gave the ultimate sacrifice so that freedom and democracy could live on. The memorial was conceived and built, in an aggressive time frame, to ensure that living members of this great generation would see and walk through the pillars of stone that memorialize their sacrifices and accomplishments.

So too, in Guam, our greatest generation is also in their twilight years and seeking acknowledgment and closure. I speak of our manamko, our Chamorro elders, who were victims of the atrocities of war, a war they

did not choose, but endured with loyalty and hope. 22,000 Chamorros lived for 32 months under the brutal hand of an occupying force that showed no mercy. These Chamorro men, women and children, who were content and peaceful under the authority of the United States, braved forced labor, torture, and other unspeakable acts under the occupying forces until the return of "Uncle Sam." Some 1,000 Chamorros were not so fortunate and lost their lives during this time of inconceivable hardship.

Some have since passed on, but those who remain of this great generation of Chamorros have lived without the peace or tranquility that comes only from the healing of closure. Although neither you nor I can ever imagine the pain of their experiences, they will forever be haunted by the memories of the war and will always live with the horrors they saw. During their lifetime, they have recounted their memories of the war, some even appearing before members of Congress in 1990 during the last meaningful war claims hearings.

Fourteen years later in 2004, they participated in hearings held by the Commission, reliving once again their nightmares and recalling, for the benefit of those lucky enough to have been spared of such experiences, their thoughts and memories of a time when they knew not whether tomorrow would bring the continued pain of living under a foreign oppressor, or perhaps the freedom of death. Today, I urge members of Congress and the Administration that we not let another year go by without bringing closure to a war claims process that began 60 years ago.

The Guam War Claims Review Commission was established to "determine whether there was parity of war claims paid to the residents of Guam under the Guam Meritorious Claims Act as compared with awards made to other similarly affected U.S. citizens or nationals in territory occupied by the Imperial Japanese military forces during World War II."

I wish to commend the diligent work of the War Claims Review Commission. Chairman Tamargo, Speaker Unpingco, Justice Cruz, Mr. Lagomarsino, and Ms. Van Cleve conducted extensive research and listened to hours of first hand accounts of the atrocities. They delivered a comprehensive and concise report of the facts that have transpired over the last 60 years with regards to the Guam war claims process. I trust that their work is one of the last chapters of this historic road to bring closure to this issue.

As the people of Guam commemorate the events of sixty years ago, the convening of this hearing to review the recommendations of the Commission is most significant and symbolic of this Committee's desire to resolve this longstanding issue. Having been directed to "advise on any additional compensation that may be necessary to compensate the people of Guam for death, personal injury, forced labor, forced march, and internment", the Guam War Claims Review Commission has made several recommendations. On behalf of the people of Guam who suffered the atrocities of war, I support the Review Commission's recommendations:

- That Congress acknowledge both the suffering of the Guamanians during the Japanese occupation of Guam in World War II and the loyalty shown by the Guamanians to the United States during the war.
- That Congress provide funding in an amount sufficient to fund the compensation plan attached in the report for the purposes of compensating Category I, Claims for Death, and Category II, Claims for Personal Injury, Including Rape and Malnutrition; Forced Labor; Forced March; and Internment, Including Hiding to Avoid Capture.
- That Congress establishes a "Foundation to Fund World War II Loyalty Scholarships". Said Trust Fund would provide for scholarships, medical facilities, and other public purposes for the benefit of the people of Guam as outlined by the Commission.

I note that the activities of the Trust Fund are modeled after the fund established under the ALEUTIAN AND PRIBILOF ISLANDS RESTITUTION ACT OF 1988. I understand that disbursements may be made from the Trust Fund to sponsor research and educational activities, so that the events surrounding the wartime occupation and liberation of Guam as well as the experiences and loyalty of the people of Guam will be remembered, and so that the causes and circumstances of this and other wartime events may be illuminated and understood.

The Commission's recommendations would provide a long overdue remedy for what has become known as one of America's forgotten wartime wards. As reported by the Commission, the people of Guam were directly involved in the mass evacuation and detention in concentration camps throughout the island.

Mr. Chairman, you have seen first hand the loyalty of the Chamorro people, having been to Guam several months ago, and seeing your Chamorro constituency in Tracy, California, who last weekend commemorated the 60th anniversary of Guam's liberation. Such remembrance and commemoration are not isolated to our Island – the people of Guam, no matter where they are, gather together in communities across the nation and celebrate that which they hold so dear – that which they and their children have fought to defend in all of America's wars since that fateful day 60 years ago today – the Freedom and Liberty of the United States of America.

I have heard many accounts by our manamko who wish to move forward and complete the war claims process. There are many who will never be heard from again. Listening to those who remain, I sense the frustration in their voices not because there have been numerous other hearings for this purpose and countless testimonials, but because they too realize that their hour is near and even until now, the closure of this war claims process remains just beyond their reach.

Mr. Chairman, it is time to help this generation of U.S. citizens, our greatest Chamorro generation, to reach their destination; to find the closure they have not known; to acknowledge their dignity and courage as human beings, and their loyalty and dedication to this Great Nation. It is time to allay their fears of not being able to secure the peace and closure they deserve before they die.

Mr. Chairman, Members of the Committee, on behalf of the remaining survivors, I ask that unanimous consent be given to the Report submitted by the Guam War Claims Review Commission and that the recommendations be implemented by Congress and the Administration.

Thank You and "Dangkulo na Si Yu'us Ma'ase para todus hamyu!"

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