

Committee on Resources

Witness Testimony

COMMONWEALTH OF GUAM
"A MATTER OF NATIONAL SECURITY INTEREST"
FOR THE UNITED STATES
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Before March 5, 1521, Guam was a "free" island community inhabited for over 7,000 years by indigenous Chamorro whose origin is still being debated among anthropologists and historians.

I did not open my testimony this way to suggest that I want to go back to the "good old days of my ancestors". I am merely pointing out a meaningful historical perspective. Because historically, when anyone makes reference to Guam, the first thing that comes to mind is a "military installation island" in the Western Pacific. Also, I want to show how easily it is to focus on the symptom rather than the disease; the messenger rather than the message; the tree rather than the forest; and the burden rather than the potential (i. e., **What Guam is rather than what Guam could be**). So that we are absolutely clear as to who and what we are all talking about, globally or geographically, Guam is an island with a total land mass area of about 212 square miles; with nearly 160,000 inhabitants; and situated at approximately 146 east longitude by 13 north latitude in the Western Pacific and, **by air**, about three hours from Japan; three and half hour from South Korea; four hours from Taiwan; five hours from Hong Kong; four hours from the Philippines; five and half hours from Beijing. Guam, **by air**, however, is eight hours from Honolulu; twelve hours from California and sixteen hours from Washington, D. C. Compared with the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands composed of several islands combined, Guam's land mass is nearly twice as large; over three times as much population; and, has been a possession of the United States since 1898 while the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands just joined the American family since the mid-70s.

From this description, one can easily conclude that Guam is more Asian/Pacific than American, notwithstanding that it is the western-most **possession** of the U. S. Government, the farthest removed, and strategically, it is, today, a vibrant and dynamic gateway to the Asia/Pacific region.

Guam was a colony of Spain from 1521 until 1898 when the Spanish/American war ended and Spain ceded Guam to the U. S. Government. Guam was used, in the early years, by the United States as a "coaling station" in the administration of its national security interest throughout this region. Upon acquiring Guam, the U. S. Government invested billions of dollars and continues to invest more. Except for a very brief period when Guam was under the control of the Japanese by an act of war which was remedied thirty months later by its recapture by the American armed forces, the U. S. Government **owned and ruled** the island of Guam and its people, even though I was taught in civic classes and throughout my life that the U. S. Government fought a very bitter war to declare and prove just the opposite, that no government may own any type or class of **people**. Guam was the only U. S. soil invaded and occupied by the Japanese military forces, who, in the thirty months of occupation, were responsible for some of the most atrocious war-crimes ever committed by an occupying enemy forces.

During World War II, the U. S. **spent** a great deal of **money** and American **lives** recapturing Guam from the Japanese. After the war, Guam was placed in the center-stage of the strategic military buildup, especially

with the stationing of the B52s at Anderson Air force Base equipped with conventional land nuclear capabilities. Guam, unknown to its inhabitants and local leaders, was again placed in ay" because the U. S. Government considered Guam's strategic importance as principally that of a military use to protect its national security interest, act as the westernmost point in its security perimeter and the early warning beacon for the rest of the United States.

At the advent of the "cold war", Guam continued its strategic military importance when it was again used as the Pacific Command during the 1950 "police action" in the Korean peninsula. As in WW II, Guam's sons were called to defend the United States and were asked to make the supreme sacrifice by giving-up their lives, the highest number per capita compared to any similar community in the United States, in defense of their country during the 1950 "police action" in Korea and the undeclared war in Vietnam, a decade later. After the debacle in Vietnam, Guam again played a critical strategic military role evacuating and processing refugees considered essential and at risk under "Operation New Life", "Baby Lift" and extricating the United States from Vietnam. When ever there is a military need such as during the eruption of Mount Pinatubo causing the closure of Clark Air Base in the Philippines, the Gulf War during the Dessert Storm multi-national engagement and the evacuation of the Kurds from Iraq, Guam continued to play a critical strategic military role in the protection of the national security interest of the United States. Also, when the U. S. Government needed to contain its cost and in its effort to downsize the military, the United States reached all the way across the Pacific and touch Guam. While this act on the part of the United States was not necessarily bad, it did produced a long lasting aberration in the limited economy Guam was enjoying. This negative act forced Guam to be innovative and creative by demanding the return of excess land unused by the military and converting a negative incident into the economic success currently happening today.

With this introduction, I will now proceed with my testimony by stating that, as a resident of Guam and a citizen of the United States, I am honored by this privilege and for this opportunity to present one reason why the U. S. Government must grant the status of Commonwealth to Guam.

I know that you and your committee members have heard the same thing articulated in my introduction above more times than you would appreciate. These facts are being articulated here because they support the reasons why the U. S. Government must grant the status of Commonwealth to Guam as a matter of protecting its national security interest in this region. The Asia/Pacific region, since the beginning of the 1990s, has demonstrated an economic growth, stability, development and continued enhancement with no end in sight, even surpassing the traditional international trade the United States have enjoyed through its Atlantic borders since the Industrial Revolution era.

While the international trade within the Atlantic region and throughout Europe is still very significant, the growth and expansion, with the eminent inauguration of a consolidated trade union in Europe, have leveled off. The United States needs to expand its global market to protect its national security interest. It may sound strange that the global market and international trade opportunities are being discussed in support of the interest of United States' national security. However, if one examines the necessary components for an independent nation to become a "world super power" or, better yet, what caused the decline of the United Soviet Socialist Republic (USSR), one cannot miss the most important component; continued economic health. The economic health of a nation determines that nation's capabilities in becoming and sustaining a world super power position. The economic factors important for a continued economic health of any nation include the ability to, with as little as possible restraint or barriers, create and accumulate capital; the unrestrained freedom of the private, non-governmental, sector to pursue an entrepreneurial based economy; unrestricted flow of money; abundance of raw materials and unlimited highly motivated and trained human resources; stable governmental policies and laws; unrestricted market access; dismantling of governmental

barriers, tariff and quota; and, a government that is of laws rather than of man where legal recourse is understandable, practical, tested and certain. Without a stable, healthy economy with excellent growth, development and enhanced opportunities, any independent nation cannot grow and develop. This is a fact that is rapidly being accepted by military planners and leaders. To be a world super power, one must first have the economic means supported with the necessary technology and a wide based commitment of its people because, with a world power status comes the responsibilities associated with such global position. The United States is the only world superpower. To continue, she must protect, enhance and anchor herself permanently and securely within this region where much of the economic activity is to be centered in the next millenium. Guam, because of its location, loyalty and patriotism will strategically always be of great military and economic value to the United States.

To express this differently, one can look at Guam as an aircraft carrier, an economic vessel permanently and securely anchored, within this region which will herald in one of the greatest economic booms in the next millenium; a global market where nearly one half of the world population resides; a region where virtually unlimited raw materials and human resources are located; and, where the build up of capital appears limitless. After all of these have been said and done, obvious questions arises:

'What does the national security interest of the United States have to do with granting Guam its Commonwealth political status? And, how are these arguments about the national security interest of the United States relevant to Guam's Commonwealth political status?'

Imagine the United States having a continued physical presence in this region through a common wealth relationship with Guam. The U. S. Government will not only have a world super power presence that is secured and entrenched in the continental boundaries of the United States, but also a physical presence in Asia. It may be argued that the Unites States can do whatever it pleases now that she is the only world super power without the need or assistance from Guam.

After all, what is being a world super power if one can not command respect?

While this is a matter of fact today, it is not guaranteed for the future nor can the United States take its world super power position for granted. In a matter of a few decades, it has been projected that there will be nearly 2 billion people in China and this region will support over one half of the world's population. Also, in a matter of a few decades, this region will be boasting a per capita disposable personal income equal to one half of the world's disposable personal income. The level of affluence in this region will surpass those in Europe, Africa and even South America. In my own estimation, this region will support a global market equal to two thirds of the world's total market within the first century of the next millenium. A majority of global economists predicted that the gross national product of the People's Republic of China, with over 2 billion population, will equal the gross national product of the United States within the next fifty years. This nation alone will support a massive market never experienced by any other nation on earth, with a level of affluence that will be second only to those truly industrialized nations like the United States and Japan. The European Common Market will not compare nor be able to compete with the single market in China.

Still again, can not the United States command leadership as the only world super power, without Guam?

Clearly, the answer again is yes!

As a matter of fact, with the United States being the only world super power today, she really doesn't need anyone. But, how long can this solo existence continue? Without a continued economic health on a global

basis, the United States will be reduced to that of a second rate nation and, this is the critical reason why, for the protection of its national security interest, the United States must grant Guam its commonwealth political status, now!

At present, it may be difficult to justify such a move and investment granting Guam its common wealth political status now, when the United States is basking in her glory as truly the only world super power. However, while the return on such investment may not be immediate or within our lifetime, in a few generation, just imagine the United States with a commonwealth relationship with Guam. Guam, as mentioned earlier is more Asian/Pacific than American. It is physically located here right in the middle of this region destined to herald in the greatest economic growth and development this planet has ever experienced since the Industrial Revolution. Also, imagine the United States having as its westernmost territory, the island of Guam, U.S. A., with its laws, courts, government, currency and economy, again, right in the middle of this region. Picture the United States here on this island, a major player and initiator, developer and beneficiary of all of the economic benefits to come. Visualize a world super power among the other tigers within this region. Can all of these benefits be secured by the United States safely entrenched within the confine of its continental boundaries?

The answer again is Yes!

But just imagine how better and easier it would be if the United States is situated right in the middle of all of these economic activities. I hope that by now, the question of how relevant the growth, development and enhancement of the United States' economic interest is to protection of its national security interest, has been answered. Quite simply, without a continued economic health, a nation will not and can not secure the needed resources to protect its national security interest, no different than a nation's national security interest is threatened by the importation and use of illegal drug if that nation is unable to win its war against drug. War, for any reason, requires the economic resources plus the willingness of a nation people to sacrifice their lifestyle and livelihood. This is the bottom line to everything a nation is all about.

If we extend this argument further, imagine the United States safely, secured and permanently entrenched in this region through its commonwealth relationship with Guam. While our generation may not be able to witness much of the next century at the turn of the millenium, our children and grand children will be around to witness and participate in the possible consolidation and reconstitution of a regional state among the island nations within the entire Micronesia to form the next state of the United States of America.

Is this far fetched?

Perhaps to you and me and my generation but, definitely not to my children and grandchildren. Just imagine the limitless possibilities a Micronesian regional state of the United States of America can create! At this time, I can only speculate and imagine some of the possibilities. The United States is truly a global nation, in a literal sense. Its currency, laws, government and democracy truly span the globe, from its eastern border in the Atlantic through Alaska, Hawaii, Guam and around this planet to perhaps Puerto Rico in the Caribbean.

In conclusion, I not am here before you to beg for a commonwealth political status with the United States although I believe that Guam has presented its legal, moral and political justification to develop a closer political relationship with the United States. I also believe it is up to Washington and Congress to work for justice in the much needed improvement of Guam's political status with the United States. While it may be appropriate to say that the U. S. Government may be suffering of schizophrenia if it insists in calling "

Guam, U. S. A. where America's Day begin" and at the same time denying Guam's request for a closer political relationship by granting its request for a Commonwealth status with the United States, this is not the bottom-line reason why I am here before you today. I am here to articulate to you and this committee **what is in it for the United States** if it grants Guam's request for a Commonwealth relationship. Quite simply, the bottom-line reason why the United States **must** grant Guam's request for a Commonwealth relationship is a **matter of national security interest** for the United States.

Thank you!

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