

**OPENING STATEMENT THE HONORABLE DONNA M. CHRISTENSEN
CHAIRWOMAN, SUBCOMMITTEE ON INSULAR AFFAIRS
OVERSIGHT HEARING ON “IDENTIFYING LABOR SOLUTIONS
FOR THE GUAM MILITARY BUILD-UP”**

September 23, 2008

A little more than a year ago, the Subcommittee responded to a request from our colleague and Delegate from Guam, Ms. Bordallo, and travelled to the island to conduct an oversight hearing on the planned military buildup scheduled to occur within the next decade.

In Congress, one does not know Guam without also knowing Congresswoman Bordallo. And anyone familiar with the Guam buildup, is aware that Congresswoman Bordallo is fighting for Guam’s interests on all fronts – the island’s people, economic opportunity, preservation of its environment and its culture. It is because of her concern for Guam’s future that the Subcommittee has taken great interest in this issue and I applaud her for diligence and fortitude.

As many here are aware, an agreement struck between the United States and the government of Japan in 2005

would ultimately result in the relocation of approximately 8,000 U.S. Marines from Okinawa to Guam. In addition to that number, the Department of Defense estimates 9,000 more comprising Marine families and others to support the new relocation will be needed.

The relocation will cost anywhere between \$10-\$15 billion dollars. A little more than half of such costs will be shouldered by the Japanese government with the remainder by the United States. During the August 2007 oversight hearing, the Joint Guam Program Office's Executive Director, retired General David Bice, testified that of the projected 15,000 additional jobs which will be created to execute construction on Guam – approximately 75%, or a little more than 11,000, would need to come from off-island. The remaining 4,000 jobs could be filled locally by Guam residents.

Today's hearing focuses on just one piece of the Guam buildup – labor solutions. We are aware that the Interagency Group on Insular Areas, led by the Department

of the Interior, has met and established working groups to collaborate with Guam and that DOD is also active in these meetings.

Even with such partnerships however, I believe it is still necessary that the Federal government bare the greater burden in helping Guam prepare. We have a responsibility to give the island community assurances that their interests are also ours.

In terms of the matter before us, I believe that it is important for Guam's residents to know that they will be the first to fill jobs and that the Federal government is assisting their institutions to prepare its residents. Our government should be instilling confidence that federal and local laws will be enforced to ensure that the H-2 workforce will be there to do a job and not be left behind. And that nothing we do to meet our country's mission in Asia and the Pacific comes to the detriment of the island's community.

This buildup has been characterized as one of the largest realignment missions in our country's history and it should therefore command the attention of all federal agencies, working together at all levels. I am skeptical that without the full pledge and collaboration of all federal agencies, tangible success for the island will not be realized. I hope that this hearing offers us optimism that everything which can be done for Guam and the region is being carried out.

I am pleased that our first panel comprises leaders who are central to the solutions needed for Guam over the next decade. We welcome back our former colleague, Congressman Robert Underwood, who is now the President of the University of Guam; from the Guam Community College, its' President Mary Okada; and from the Guam Department of Labor, its director Ms. Maria Connelley. For our second panel, we also welcome the executive director of the Joint Guam Program Office; retired General David Bice and the Acting Assistant Secretary for Insular Affairs, Mr. Doug Domenech.

