



NEWS from the Democrats

Committee on Resources

U.S. Rep. Nick Rahall, Ranking Democrat

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Remarks of U.S. Rep. Nick Rahall
Ranking Democrat - Resources Committee
Hearing on the Guam War Claims Review Commission Report on the
Implementation of the Guam Meritorious Claims Act of 1945
July 21, 2004

Mr. Chairman, at the outset I want to acknowledge the sacrifices made and the pain suffered by the people of Guam during the island's occupation by Japanese forces in World War II. For more than two and a half years, brutal atrocities were committed against the people of Guam. The horrific acts of public beheadings, beatings, and rapes were burned into the memories of parents and children. In an island community of 22,000, everyone knew one another and so no one escaped the tragedies of wartime occupation.

Sixty years ago today, U.S. forces recaptured the island from the hands of our enemy and our troops were met by grateful people. As the stories of their two and half year ordeal became clear, we learned of the island's collective efforts to hide and protect the whereabouts of American serviceman George Tweed from Japanese soldiers. We know that American flags were protected like family treasures, ordinary citizens formed small militia groups to attack their occupiers, and songs were composed praying for "Uncle Sam" to come back to Guam.

The manner in how they celebrate their liberation today is proof that the people of Guam were grateful for the return of Uncle Sam. But perhaps unknown to them is that their acts during occupation became their "pledges of allegiance" to the United States. And for such patriotism, the United States is a grateful Nation.

This Committee convenes today to hear testimony and receive the report of the Guam War Claims Review Commission. Our former colleague, Congressman Robert Underwood, was responsible for the enactment of legislation creating this

Commission. I commend Guam's current Delegate, Ms. Bordallo, for her hard work in continuing the passionate pursuit towards resolution.

We welcome the Chairman of the Commission, Mauricio Tamargo, and his fellow Commissioners who have joined us for this hearing. Realizing the study needed for to research the historical record for this issue as well as the emotional aspect attached to it, it's an understatement to say the work of your Commission has been difficult. However, we do appreciate your focus and look forward to your testimony, as well as to the testimony of Mr. Cohen from the Interior Department.

We also welcome two of Guam's distinguished leaders, Lieutenant Governor Moylan and our former colleague Congressman Blaz. I would like to wish them Happy Liberation and I look forward to their comments on the Commission's work.