

The Honorable Kaleo S. Moylan
Lieutenant Governor of Guam
Government of Guam

Testimony
Before the Committee on Resources
United States House of Representatives

Hearing on H.R. 1595
" An Act to Implement the Recommendations of the Guam War Claims Review Commission"

Wednesday, April 20, 2005

Chairman Pombo, Ranking Member Rahall, Congresswoman Bordallo and Members of the House Committee on Resources:

For the record I am Kaleo S. Moylan, Lieutenant Governor of Guam. I am humbled to be here today to testify on behalf of the people of Guam to support H.R. 1595. The war claims process has been long and contentious and the time has come to bring it to proper completion. I am honored to provide testimony on the single most important piece of legislation concerning this issue to date.

I would like to recognize the Department of Interior for their swift action in drafting this legislation which serves as a starting point for meaningful discussions by the Administration and the Congress to finish a process that began in 1945. It has taken the collective efforts of four delegates to Washington, numerous hearings over the last 60 years that included first hand testimonials describing in great detail the horrific acts inflicted on the Chamorro people, and the establishment of a Review Commission to get war claims back on the table for discussion and consideration. I also commend you, Mr. Chairman, and the 63 colleagues who have signed on as co-sponsors to this piece of legislation introduced by Congresswoman Bordallo for your support and for expeditiously scheduling this hearing.

War claims has been a 60-year old struggle that must be completed. Guam's leadership represented here today, namely Congresswoman Bordallo, Congressmen Blaz and Underwood, Senators Unpingco and Cruz, and I know that working together with the relevant federal counterparts in the Administration and your good Committee, we can find an amicable solution to the claims process that will satisfy all parties and bring it to fruition.

I commend once again the Guam War Claims Review Commission, for they had the arduous task of listening to days of tearful and often emotional testimony from our manamko and the descendents of those who have passed before us. The Commission also spent long hours deliberating and reviewing other claims processes to determine whether there was parity in the treatment of Chamorros. The recommendations made by that Commission, which included Senators Unpingco and Cruz, were based on and constrained by existing law and precedent.

I say this because the sentiments at home are that all victims should be recognized and made whole in the war claims process. The claims process is an emotionally charged issue and this emotion is guided by the Chamorro familial custom of ensuring the proper care of the entire family. Unfortunately, a vast majority of survivors of the war will be left out if H.R. 1595 is passed in its current form. I would be remiss in my duties, and denying the honor and dignity of those who have passed away if I did not bring this to your attention.

It is then within Congress' power to decide whether existing law and precedent will stand, or if they will be changed to bring full justice to even those who have died. It is our hope that the final product, once properly deliberated and weighed by Congress and the Administration, will bring closure to the pain and suffering experienced by Guam's Greatest Generation.

I truly believe that it is the intent of Congress to resolve this matter, given the magnitude of support with 64 co-sponsors including the Chairman and Ranking member of the House Judiciary Committee. Furthermore, it is apparent by your swift actions Mr. Chairman, that you feel strongly about this issue and believe the Resources Committee must solve this problem affecting the insular area as you have called for hearings on war claims in the 108th Congress and now in the 109th Congress.

The July 2004 hearing on the War Claims Review Commission's report commemorated the 60th Anniversary of Guam's liberation and landing of the Marines in Asan and Agat. On that hearing hinged the hopes of those who survived the atrocities – their desire for acknowledgement and finality in their twilight years.

These survivors were pleased that on that same day House Resolution 737 was introduced by Congresswoman Bordallo.

The resolution calls attention to the unique experience endured by the people of Guam and the extraordinary heroism displayed by the U.S. service members who took part in the battle to liberate Guam.

The occupation and liberation of Guam is a story that must be told to all Americans and freedom-loving people throughout the world. It is a story of sacrifice, a story of loyalty, and a story of dignity – one that will never be fully known by anyone other than those who lived it.

Picture if you will a group of children dressed in their best suits and dresses, sitting reverently in the Agana Cathedral, waiting to receive their First Holy Communion. It is December 8th, the traditional day for this event on Guam—December 7th in the United States. Then imagine the tranquility shattered by the terror of fighter planes, explosions and panic as everyone ran for cover. The bombing and invasion of Guam marked the beginning of a painful chapter in the lives of our elders, many whom were just children at that time.

The period of occupation that followed was the most difficult experience that any American non-combatant could ever possibly live through. And the joy and gratitude felt in the hearts of those same Americans when Uncle Sam returned to liberate Guam was matched in depth and intensity only by the pity and kindness exhibited by the liberators themselves.

But across the Pacific, amid the jubilation of defeating an enemy force, the nation failed to recognize the loyalty of those few surviving natives of our small island. In absolving the Japanese government for its aggression and actions, the nation in essence turned a blind eye to our people's suffering.

Yet, while the principals in this act have downplayed what occurred on Guam, we welcome almost a million Japanese to our shores every year with a regionally renowned hospitality that fosters and supports strong U.S. – Japan relations. Chamorros bear no ill-will to their fellow man, but there is an expectation that our past struggles be acknowledged and the nation expend its best efforts to make things right.

Sadly, many of those who lived this story are no longer with us. They have passed on knowing their suffering and sacrifice were acknowledged, remembered and appreciated by their children, their grandchildren and the people of their island – but without knowing the same about the people of this Nation. The few that remain of this Greatest Generation seek peace of mind and finality.

And while no words of mine can ever convey those events and the emotions experienced by the people of Guam during the occupation years, I would like to present to you a copy of KUAM 's video documentary prepared last year which will give you a glimpse of this story. In addition, hours of video testimony taken during the Commission's hearings on Guam offer similar insights into the atrocities that befell the Chamorro people. I respectfully urge you and members of the Committee to take time to view these videos.

I would also venture to say that within your own congressional districts you will find a Chamorro who was a victim of the war. Take an opportunity to talk to them and hear the hardships they endured during World War II. I am certain you will gain a greater appreciation and understanding of the tragic circumstances that befell them.

Two years ago, I had the fortuitous honor to join our veterans on the 59th Anniversary of the Battle of Iwo Jima. That campaign, as we all know, was one of the bloodiest battles of World War II. Guam joined in with the rest of the Nation in honoring these brave heroes, and paid tribute to the thousands who made the ultimate sacrifice so we could enjoy our freedoms today.

Our veterans and their families found peace of mind and closure as they walked the hallowed shores of Iwo Jima. I gazed in awe as American and Japanese Flags were hoisted atop Mt. Suribachi - providing a beacon of hope and serving as a symbol of enduring freedom. I watched as American and Japanese veterans stood side by side, once enemies-now friends, exchange handshakes in peace. I witnessed the goodwill that accompanied the mutual acknowledgement and celebration of the sacrifices made by these survivors.

In those moments, though I felt a solemn respect for the brave soldiers who sacrificed their lives for the cause of freedom, I also felt an emptiness knowing that the peace and closure I had just witnessed was never felt by those Chamorros who survived the occupation of their land.

In remembering the great sacrifice of those who died in the war in the Pacific, Admiral Nimitz said, "They fought together as brothers in arms; they died together and now they sleep side by side.....To them, we have a solemn obligation - the obligation to ensure that their sacrifice will help make this a better and safer world in which to live." This holds true for those

who sacrificed as victims of that war, and every other war that has since followed.

Mr. Chairman, it is only befitting that in fulfillment of this obligation we create the “Guam World War II Loyalty Recognition Fund”, and I stress the word loyalty – for loyalty to this great nation runs deep and strong in the heart of every Chamorro. Even in their darkest hours of World War II, though they were under the American flag but not yet citizens of the United States, they remained steadfast in their loyalty and commitment to the freedom and liberty they experienced under the red, white and blue. They were committed to protecting the life of Navy radioman George Tweed, who was hunted by the Japanese. Many of our brave Chamorros lost their lives in an effort to protect this representative of America, a real life embodiment of their hope for the return of Uncle Sam. They hid American flags, longing for the day they could hold them high once again.

I can emphatically state that this loyalty runs as deep today as it did 60 years ago – as evidenced by the thousands of Guam’s daughters and sons who proudly serve in our Armed Forces - Chamorros like Army Reservist Michael Guerrero – currently recuperating at the Walter Reed Medical Center from injuries sustained in Iraq.

Furthermore, we support the establishment of a “Guam World War II Remembrance Trust Fund.” The Trust Fund would be used to grant scholarships, sponsor research, provide educational and media activities, so that the events surrounding the World War II occupation and subsequent liberation, as well as the loyalty of the people of Guam, will always be remembered, and so that the causes and circumstances of this and other wartime events may be illuminated and understood. The facilities and programs that will be established from the Remembrance Fund will serve as a living testament to all who suffered during the occupation period.

Mr. Chairman, I submit that there is no better hour than now to act on this measure. Those to whom we owe our respect and admiration for their loyalty and perseverance do not have the luxury of time. Congress acknowledged this when it created the Guam War Claims Review Commission to determine whether there was parity of war claims. They worked diligently to ensure that the inequities of the past were corrected. Drawing out this process for additional study or further debate would be an injustice to those who have already suffered more than they should. Holding this over until the 110th Congress and conducting new hearings is a step backwards and will only exacerbate the pain, reopening the deep emotional wounds that lay in the hearts of the victims.

I am reminded that in the wake of the 9/11 tragedy, this great nation spared no effort in acting quickly to do right by those innocent civilians who suffered at the hands of a new enemy of the United States. There is no doubt that the manner in which this effort was handled was correct, swift and just – it was the right thing to do and the right way to do it. There could be no greater contrast to this action, than the piecemeal and frustratingly unhurried treatment afforded the Chamorro people who suffered at the hands of, now, one of our strongest allies – the 60 years it has taken to get to this hearing was the wrong way to do it. Let’s correct this injustice and contribute to a peaceful sunset for Guam’s Greatest Generation.

The passage and enactment of H.R. 1595 will provide a long overdue remedy for what has become known as one of America's forgotten wartime wards. Remember that over sixty years ago, these men and women waited faithfully for Uncle Sam to deliver them from the hands of an oppressive and brutal occupying force. Today, they wait faithfully again for deliverance – deliverance from an oppressive existence with no satisfactory ending – no closure. I urge you to set them free from this most un-fitting end by giving unanimous consent to H.R. 1595.

Thank You and “Dangkulo na Si Yu’us Ma’ase para todus hamyu!”

KALEO S. MOYLAN
I Segundu Maga’lâhi Guahan
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