

Honorable Antonio R. Unpingco
Chairman, Committee on Tourism, Maritime, Military and Veterans Affairs
28th Guam Legislature

Testimony
Before the Committee on Resources
United States House of Representatives

Hearing on H.R. 1595, the "Guam World War II Loyalty Recognition Act"
April 20, 2005

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Committee on Resources:

The time has come to put into law, the final missing piece to a situation that has waited some 60 years to be resolved. I appear before you today bearing Resolution No. 1(LS), endorsing the report and recommendations of the Guam War Claims Review Commission. This resolution was the first official business of the 28th Guam Legislature, signifying its importance to our people. Its importance was such that it was discussed not more than a few hours following our inauguration on January 3, 2005. The floor debate became very emotional and trying – bringing back the bad memories of the war fought on the only U.S. soil occupied by the enemy.

Resolution No. 1(LS) speaks to the many attempts to bring justice to the people of Guam following the Japanese occupation during World War II. It makes note of the many atrocities that befell my people, including death, personal injury, forced labor, forced march and internment.

In 1983 Guam's Delegate to Congress, the late Honorable Antonio B. Won Pat, asked Congress to establish a "commission to review the facts and circumstances surrounding Guamanian losses caused by the occupation of Guam by the Japanese Imperial forces in World War II". Former Congressman General Ben Blaz introduced similar legislation in each of his four terms in Congress, and former Congressman Robert A. Underwood asked colleagues in each of his five terms to approve such a commission. Mr. Underwood was finally successful in getting such approval from the 107th Congress.

The resulting Guam War Claims Review Commission found that the U. S. Congress was misinformed when it excluded Guam from coverage for World War II property damage and loss claims under Title II of the War Claims Act of 1948, amended in 1962, because it incorrectly assumed that all of the claims of residents of Guam had been adequately resolved under the Guam Act, leaving a number of claims that had not been timely filed under the Guam Act due to lack of notice and a short, truncated filing period.

What Resolution No. 1(LS) does not contain are the names of those who suffered these wartime atrocities, but it does attempt to capture the emotional turmoil caused by the waiting that has caused many of the aggrieved to lose hope that their sacrifices would not go unheeded!

What Resolution No. 1(LS) does not contain is a listing of those who were alive up to 1950, a listing of those still alive in 1960, and listings of those who were still alive in 1970 and 1980. The listing of those alive as of 1990 is being compiled even as I present my testimony here today. What is the significance of these dates and lists? They represent the passing of decades and the passing away of my people who will never receive what has been granted to everyone else under the U.S. flag that were touched by the events of World War II. In fact, the selection and adoption of the year 1990 was personally difficult for me. It meant that my own father and mother would be deemed ineligible from receiving any compensation since they died in 1972 and 1983, respectively. However, I wanted to bring closure to this emotional issue, so I voted to accept the date of 1990. Dad...Mom...please forgive me for doing what is necessary to bring some dignity to our people...

On another personal note, my elder sister Gloria asked me if she would ever see any compensation as a result of my involvement in the Guam War Claims Review Commission. I told her I was optimistic and hopeful that this Commission's Final Report would result in compensation. Unfortunately, she passed away almost one year ago, and will not see compensation! By my own reckoning, some 15 people died in just the past week, adding to the numbers who will not live to see justice done!

The people of Guam make one more plea, and hopefully their last plea, for the support of Congress and the President to end this dark chapter in Guam's history. Let justice be done now! The people of Guam do not want to repeat their stories to the 110th Congress and ask for what has been denied to them for more than 60 years! Please end the bad memories! Do the right thing! The time has come...

