

U.S. Military Eyes Guam as Staging Post to Counter Threats

By [Global Research](#)

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HAGATNA, Guam, Jan 3 (Kyodo) - The United States plans to fortify Guam, upgrading its military base on the island into a strategic staging post that would allow rapid access to potential flashpoints in the Pacific region.

More troops, including 9,182 Marines, army soldiers and their dependents from Okinawa, Japan, will be relocated to this island, while more than 9,000 transient troops, mainly from the navy's carrier strike group, will also be based here.

The "overarching purpose" of beefing up Guam as a military fortress is "to provide mutual defense, deter aggression, and dissuade coercion in the Western Pacific Region, according to a draft impact report recently released by the U.S. Defense Department.

The proposed buildup would allow U.S. military forces to respond to regional threats and contingencies in a "flexible" and "timely manner" as they work to "defend U.S., Japan and allied interests," the study says.

"Moving these forces to Guam would place them on the furthest forward element of sovereign U.S. territory in the Pacific, thereby maximizing their freedom of action," it says.

According to the report, the United States envisions Guam as a "local command and control structure" manned, equipped, trained, and sustained by a modern logistics infrastructure.

The relocation and buildup cost, including expansion of infrastructure needed to maintain a permanent base for Marines and U.S. Army troops on Guam and Tinian, an island 160 kilometers to the northeast, is pegged at \$12 billion.

Japan has agreed to chip in \$6.09 billion of the total.

The plan would entail "increased operational activities," more frequent berthing by aircraft carriers and other warships, building aviation training ranges and upgrading of harbors, wharves and ports.

The existing Andersen Air Force Base on Guam would be expanded to include the air elements of the Marines. A new Marine base would be built "right next door," the study says.

Various firing ranges would be built to meet the various training requirements of a larger military contingent.

The U.S. also plans to expand its live fire training ranges in Tinian where about 200 or more Marines could "realistically train" with their weapons and equipment "without restrictions." Also on the drawing board is the building of a deep-draft wharf at Guam's Apra Harbor to support nuclear-powered aircraft carriers transiting through the area.

A U.S. Army "Air and Missile Defense Task Force" is also proposed for Guam to protect the island and U.S. forces there against the threat of harm from ballistic missile attacks.

Weapons emplacement sites would be constructed to accommodate the "Terminal High Altitude Area Defense" system, which is designed to intercept missiles during late mid-course or final stage flight.

Other emplacement sites would accommodate Patriot missiles, which are designed to strike threat aircraft, unmanned aerial vehicles, and cruise missiles just before impact.

The U.S. military is beefing up its presence in Guam after U.S. allies in the Pacific — the Philippines, Thailand, Australia, South Korea and Singapore — turned down U.S. requests for permanent basing of U.S. troops on their soil.

Already concerns are being raised over plans to transform Guam into "a multi-service military base." "Some of the areas that they're planning to convert into firing ranges include pristine limestone forested areas that will require some clearing of native forest trees," Jeffrey Quitugua, a biologist, told Kyodo News.

Judith Guthertz, a senator in the Guam Legislature who chairs the military buildup committee, is concerned over "land condemnation or land takings." "That is a very emotional issue for the people of Guam because of what happened after World War II where the federal government condemned so much land on Guam. We don't want a repeat of that," she told Kyodo News in an interview.

Henry Simpson, general manager of Guam Racing Federation, said the U.S. military aims to take his race track without even consulting him. "They want to run over our land," he said.

But Paul Shintaku, executive director of the Guam Buildup Office, in the Guam governor's office, said public consultations are ongoing, with a series of fora scheduled in January to enlighten the public on the plan.

Guam's government also scoffs at fears the plan will make the island prone to attacks by U.S. enemies.

"I don't see it as painting a bigger red target on us," Shintaku's deputy Nora Camacho said. "Of course we have that red light, that red circle around us...but there's a deterrence."

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