



UFISINAN I MAGA'HÅGAN GUÅHAN
OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR OF GUAM

August 26, 2024

Mark Stevens
RNZ Chief News Officer
PO Box 123
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RE: Clarification on Recent Interview with RNZ News Regarding Nuclear Weapons

Håfa Adai from Guam,

I want to start by thanking RNZ for the many times your coverage has helped showcase an issue of concern or pride regarding events in Micronesia, particularly on Guam. As we continue building relationships across the greater Pacific, it is important to the people of Guam to correct misunderstandings of how Pacific Island leaders perceive our community and our strategic value to the U.S. and our allies. Most recently, following an interview with RNZ reporter Eleisha Foon, articles and editorials were published that misrepresented my comments about my views on nuclear weapons and the possibility of a future war, causing undue distress among our regional community. Ms. Foon brought her perspective to the interview and many other interviews, which asserted that by building up the defense of Guam, we are attracting war to Micronesia and the greater Pacific.

To be clear: I do not support the presence of any nuclear armament on Guam or the Pacific. Nor do I support the escalation to nuclear warfare. I stated that Guam will likely be at risk for potential conflicts because of our strategic location in the Western Pacific which controls access to Asia trade routes. Disputes in this area could escalate into military actions. I reiterate, Guam must be prepared and must be secured.

For historical context, our strategic location is well documented in Oceania, beginning with the reality that our island stands as the gateway between two powerful imperial countries. During the 16th century, Spanish Galleons on Trans-Pacific trade routes began stopping at Guam to replenish provisions, which led to 300 years of Spanish occupation, nearly wiping out our entire population due to disease and wars. In 1898, The United States of America took possession of the Island of Guam as a spoil of The Spanish-American War, which began a political relationship that culminated with shared responsibilities for the well-being of the people of Guam. In 1941, Guam was invaded by Japan, and for three years the people of Guam experienced brutal atrocities by the hands of Imperial Japanese forces until the U.S. military liberated our people in 1944.

In our current Indo-Pacific geopolitical situation, the geographic designation of Guam and the Marianas illustrates what military planners refer to as “The Second Island Chain.” Our region’s

heightened security is due to China's well publicized strategy to take over Taiwan and the disputed South China Seas. On a near-weekly basis, North Korea fires missiles toward Guam in an attempt to improve its deadly technology with every effort.

The Leon Guerrero-Tenorio Administration continues to track and monitor military growth plans with our DoD partners, strategic government agencies, and leaders in our community, so that we may make our concerns loud and clear while also keeping residents updated with build-up related issues. Keeping the community involved requires a multi-faceted approach, including but not limited to researching the impacts on civilian housing, land, environment, and cultural resources. Since the beginning of this administration, we have worked in collaboration with community partners to include providing scoping comments on the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) actions issued by the DoD. The administration continues to engage military leadership, various Government of Guam agencies, and external stakeholders to prioritize the safety, security, and prosperity of the people of Guam throughout this process of hardening our borders and national defense.

I believe strongly in diplomacy and efforts to stabilize Pacific democracies, and I am pleased to see so many efforts to do so. More U.S embassies are opening. The U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) just attended the recent Micronesian Island Forum meeting on Guam. And I am excited about their additional efforts to push more resources into the Pacific to support defense, supply chain, and cyber security systems.

In closing, Guam is an active member of many Pacific regional organizations, and we all face similar challenges. Our Guam government and community leaders are eager to strengthen our ties and friendships with neighbors in the Pacific to meet our objective of peace and prosperity for our region.

Thank you again for your news coverage of the Pacific, and consider this letter to be a clarification of my comments during the recent interview with RNZ News.

Senseramente,



LOURDES A. LEON GUERRERO

Maga'hågan Guåhan
Governor of Guam