

**United States House of Representatives
Armed Services Committee**

**Member Day Testimony
Provided by Congressman Michael F.Q. San Nicolas (Guam, At-Large)**

Wednesday, May 5, 2021

Chairman Smith, Ranking Member Rogers, and Members of the distinguished House Armed Services Committee – thank you for the opportunity to testify on our priorities for Guam and the Indo-Pacific region in development of the Chairman’s mark for the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2022.

As a matter of national policy, in reviewing the hiring practices and policies of the Department of Defense (DoD) with the ongoing Marine relocation to Guam, it is apparent that there is an opportunity to further align community stakeholder interests on Guam and throughout the country with DoD mission. Key to such alignment is the direct availability of jobs to the communities in which DoD operates, when and if such jobs become available. With current hiring practices filtering job offerings and applicants for preference based on specific status categories such as DoD Employment, Veteran Status, Spousal Status, Priority Placement, et cetera, it would be worthwhile to further filter these categories based on community proximity, such as “DoD/Veteran/Spouse Within Commuting Area” and thereafter expanded to “DoD/Veteran/Spouse Within the State or Territory,” with a new and final preference for “Within Commuting Area” and “Within State or Territory.” Such emphasis will ensure geographic preference is part of specific and general considerations, making communities within proximity of DoD hiring opportunities direct beneficiaries and strengthening stakeholder relationships.

In continuance with our priority to align national defense interests with our specific requests for Guam we ask that this Committee continue to make strides and support USINDOPACOM’s request for a substantial Guam missile defense system that will protect our people, military intelligence, and defense assets located on and around the island. The need for the Aegis Ashore system is critical to the defense of our nation in a progressively aggressive region. We need to do more to ensure that attack or threats of attack from our adversaries are mitigated and ameliorated by the presence and potential use of greater response. As noted by Admiral Davison, the current use of the Terminal High Altitude Area Defense (THAAD) system to protect the Guam is not sufficient to address threats posed by China. Reports of Chinese ships and submarines moving around the region indicates potential for a “360-degree threat” to Guam and the Northern Mariana Islands. We must have in place this critical infrastructure to ensure that the substantial investments, assets, and American lives are secured and ready to defend the country.

Regionally our data and communications capabilities face unique threats with reports of deteriorating relations with China in the region suggesting that the DoD should take critical steps to secure American information technology assets. We understand that DoD has been addressing this through military-specific initiatives, such as the Mission Partner Environment (MPE). With the loss of protected status for information infrastructure in Hong Kong, we face serious threats to our commercial communications and information capacity; the MPE alone may not be sufficient to meet military and civilian needs. We ask that you include language to require DoD to report on activities it is taking to ensure the security of our critical communications links and explain how it plans to utilize dual-use communication services, such

as commercially operated data centers on Guam, to ensure that DoD operators and support staff have low-latency, high-fidelity communications with cloud centers in the region and in the United States. In an increasingly hostile region of INDOPACOM, we must ensure a more resilient and defensible communications hub by investing in capacity and capability in order to avoid great power conflict.

As an item specific to Guam we have an interest in addressing the fact that the Guam Air National Guard is one of only three Air Guards in the nation that does not have an aircraft or flying mission. Given Guam's geographic location and utilization for strategic positioning in the defense of our nation, it is imperative that the island be equipped with the vital resources to carry out forward missions and readiness. We ask that this Committee include language in the FY2022 NDAA requiring the Secretary of the Air Force conduct a study to determine the needs and feasibility of establishing a flying mission for the Guam Air National Guard. Although the Andersen Air Force Base currently lacks a permanently assigned aircraft, it already has the needed infrastructure to ensure that an Air National Guard flying mission would not be cost prohibitive. Additionally, while the Air Force has yet to announce the basing locations for all its forthcoming B-21 bombers, the increased focus on the Pacific theater indicate that B-21s in Guam would be station-forward.

Guam wishes to again thank this Committee for including in the FY2021 NDAA the requested provision exempting foreign labor to augment Guam's insufficient labor force. While the benefits of this are yet to be realized due to the severe impacts of COVID-19 and interpretation issues with USCIS that need to be addressed, the availability of this option has increased confidence that an augmented labor force will stimulate our economy and provide affordable housing for all on the island.

We want to thank you for your time and consideration of our requests and look forward to working with you as we secure our nation's position in the region.