

# The Poisons of Powerlessness

My name is Sabina Flores Perez, a proud daughter of Guam. I address you today on behalf of International Peoples' Coalition against Military Pollution, or (IPCAMP). IPCAMP is a coalition of currently 23 organizations committed to ending militarization and environmental contamination of communities by US military installations around the world. IPCAMP stands in solidarity with the Chamoru peoples' exercise to the right of self-determination and testifies that the recent US military buildup poses the latest threat to human rights of the Chamoru people.

The estimated influx of 35,000 US Military personnel, dependents and administrative staff into a current population of 168,000 scheduled to start in 2007 will significantly alter the demographics and political atmosphere of the island. US Immigration policies on Guam have marginalized the Chamoru population as a minority in their homeland comprising only 37 percent of the total population today. The United States continue to ignore the right of the Chamoru people to self-determination, and to date, have not implemented any contact with the Government of Guam to begin the process of decolonization.

The US military buildup will transform our island home into a forward base with the planned expansion of runways, construction of wharf storage facilities, the establishment of a Global Strike Force, development of a live-firing range. It will put our people in harm's way through the potential targeting by current adversaries of the USA rather than providing stability. The location of bases near or on top of two of three water sources that supply most of the island population are threatening the health of the current populace, both military and civilian. Recent water quality reports show the presence of military contamination, such as TCEs and radioactivity in Guam's drinking water.

The delayed and piecemeal release of military plans that were developed prior are now only being revealed to the public and implemented without much signs of stopping.

Unilateral decisions about our future are being made primarily outside of the island, without our consent and participation. Our people now question whether it is time to assert our inalienable right to choose against militarization, whether we will survive as a people in the administering power's plan to literally occupy our homeland with troops.

The delayed release of plans and the lack of our consent signify the exploitation of our political status as a colony. As Admiral Fallon from the Pacific Command says, the advantage of having bases in Guam is that it is an "American territory," and that "the island does not have the political restrictions, such as those in South Korea that could impede US military moves in an emergency." In response to "local" antagonisms throughout Asia over American military presence, whether it is in South Korea, the Philippines or Japan, the banal colonial status of Guam is what makes it such a vital asset. These statements by the soldiers of the United States are inaccurate and ignore the responsibilities of the administering power to support the right of self-determination of the Chamoru people.

Throughout Guam's history under US possession, we find statements from policy-makers and military personnel echoing this truth and indicating how the need for Guam as a strategic interest evolved: from 1898, when Guam's harbor represented an important nodal point in linking United States mercantile interests with Oriental economic possibilities, to post World War II idea that "if key island groups, such as Micronesia, could be made into American colonies, then strategic security in the post-war Pacific could be guaranteed in a number of military and non-military contexts," to today's purpose as a buffer zone, a site through which American military interests could not just be connected within the Asia/Pacific region but also defended and more importantly projected.

Under this colonial context, the things that Chamorus view as important are being stripped away: our water, our land, our culture, and the spirit of a people, whose civilization is at least 4,000 years old.

Today, I, as a member IPCAMP, stand in solidarity with the Chamoru people's human rights to self-determination and that Chamorus, *i tao'tao tano* (the people of the land), should no longer be subjected to the indignity of living as second class citizens, of being displaced from the land due to illegal land takings through eminent domain and to economic pressures placed on local residents resulting from inflation due to the sudden influx of people, and cost of living increases in order to pay for infrastructure upgrades, that are timed to benefit the military influx.

Chamorus are much more than what they are told they are worth, and deserve more than what they are given. That in order for a people to live fruitful, healthy lives with the culture intact, it is imperative to safeguard the natural, economic, and cultural resources. That it is of utmost importance to protect the water resources, the life blood of a people, from contamination and privatization, despite the pressure and desperate measures placed through enforcement of Federal laws. That to live peaceful, fruitful lives, it is essential to regain economic self-sufficiency and sustainability, and reclaim connections to the culture, history, and each other.

I, as a member of IPCAMP, hold dear that Chamoru people's human rights should not be held hostage in this Global War on Terror that does not seek peaceful means of resolving international differences and views the rise of US militarization in the Asia/Pacific region as a means to support an unsustainable economic policy. That to achieve and urgent and lasting peace in the region, the economic needs of the USA and the Asia/Pacific countries must be assessed and addressed to promote sustainability.

It is also essential to challenge the dominant media that creates fear, marginalizes voices outside the militarist agenda, and works to increase the stability of the US military strategy by creating the false appearance of unified support of increased militarization by people on Guam. It has stifled debate even in an election season which is at its peak, as candidates, rather than debating seriously over whether or not the relocation is feasible for Guam, are debating over who has the best strategy to benefit from the military.

The formation of the Guam UN delegation and its presentation before the 4th Committee is a living testament and expression that military expansion on Guam is an

impediment to and a violation of the people's right to self-determination, and this is contrary to the United Nation's goal of the Second International Decade for the Eradication of Colonialism (in 2010).

More importantly, I ask the Fourth Committee to include in the resolution on the Question of Guam, strongly encourage the Administering Power to fund the decolonization process on Guam, to clean up the military toxic sites, to return lands to the Chamoru people in an uncontaminated state, to cease the Administering Power from making the non-self governing Territory of Guam – a storage facility capable of launching weapons of mass destruction against our Asian brothers and sisters, and to investigate whether the militarization plan for Guam needed the United Nations Fourth Committee concurrence.

*– Sinangan Si Sabina Flores Perez*  
*Ginnen The International Peoples' Coalition Against Military Pollution (IPCAMP)*