

Protect: Land, Water, Air, Spirituality, Language, Culture & Human Rights

Hafa Adai distinguished members of the United Nations Special Political and Decolonization Committee (Fourth Committee) and Chairman, H.E. Mr. Jorge Arguello,

Guahu si Victoria-Lola Leon Guerrero. *Dankolo na si yu'us ma'ase* (thank you very much) for allowing me to address this very important international body. I am here on behalf of the Chamoru grassroots organization "I Nasion Chamoru," which was established in 1991 to proclaim the existence of the Chamoru people as a nation. I Nasion Chamoru celebrates the 4,000 year old history of the Chamoru people in our islands, and vows to protect the land, water, air, spirituality, language, culture and human rights of the Chamoru people. I Nasion Chamoru members have addressed this committee for several years, including our *maga'haga* (female leader) Debbie Quinata, who sends her regards.

I also represent the voices and opinions of my relatives and elders on Guåhan (Guam), who work daily to fight the continued colonization and militarization of our island. I carry the same message that has been presented to this committee for over two decades by Chamoru community leaders and elected officials like former Senator Hope Cristobal, former Congressman Robert Underwood and Ed Benavente. I fight the same fight that took the lives of Ron Rivera and former Senator and founder of I Nasion Chamoru Angel Santos. Our message has been loud and clear – the Chamoru people of Guåhan deserve to exercise our basic, inalienable human right to self-determination. But with only two years left in the second decade for the eradication of colonialism, sixty-three years after our administering power added Guåhan to the UN list of Non-Self Governing Territories, and almost fifty years after the UN passed General Assembly Resolutions 1514 (the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples) and 1541 (which establishes the three options for self-determination), Guåhan remains colonized.

Now, more than ever, the work of the Special Political and Decolonization Committee is needed on Guåhan. In order to truly eradicate colonialism, this committee must work in the interests of the people of Guåhan and not crumble to the demands of our administering power, despite its domineering role in the United Nations. The United States' claims that the Chamoru people's right to self-determination is a domestic issue that should not involve the United Nations are hypocritical and distract this committee from taking action against the hyper-militarization and continued colonization of Guåhan.

As I stand before you, the US is actively working to drastically expand their military and commercial presence on our island, creating a greater economic and social dependency that does not equip our people for decolonization, but rather pushes us devastatingly further away from it.

The US, which already occupies one-third of our island for military purposes, plans to move 17,000 Marines and their family members from Okinawa, Japan to Guåhan by 2014. In addition to those plans, the US Navy has begun to enhance its infrastructure, logistics capabilities, and waterfront facilities with the desire to support transient nuclear aircraft carriers, combat logistics force ships, submarines, surface combatants, and high-speed transport ships at their Naval Base. The US Air Force plans to develop a global intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance strike hub at Andersen Air Force Base by hosting various types of aircraft, such as fighters, bombers, tankers, and Global Hawk systems. And the Army plans to place a ballistic missile defense task force on our island.

As cited in the UN Guam Working Paper, David Bice, executive director of the office assigned to orchestrate the US military build-up, estimates that Guåhan will see an increase of 19,000 military personnel, 20,000 military family members and 20,000 foreign construction workers on the island in the next six years. As a result, Guåhan's small population of 173,000 is expected to increase 34 percent with 59,000 more people. Such a population boom will make the 62,900 Chamorus on the island a minority group in our homeland, where we already struggle to keep our culture and language alive in light of imposed US educational standards that force us to learn English and US history over our native Chamoru tongue and historical understanding of ourselves.

Part of the goal to militarize Guåhan is to reduce the US military's burden on Japanese communities. Guåhan deserves the same respect. But because we remain in possession of the United States, our rights to create economic and social alternatives that free us from being dependent on the US, and help us maintain our culture and language, are being explicitly ignored.

The US military's burden on Guåhan's communities will increase manifold. The military has already begun awarding construction contracts and building on military bases, despite the fact that no official plan has been funded or approved for this military build-up, and no official assessment of the environmental impacts has been completed. The US is conducting an Environmental Impact Study in a rushed two-year timeframe that does not include much participation or input from the island community. And in a preliminary version of that study, the US did not present evidence that the social, cultural or political implications of such a massive population boom and military build-up will be addressed.

Both the US Department of Defense (DOD) and the Government of Guam face multiple challenges in trying to address the needs associated with this unprecedented military build-up, largely due to colossal uncertainties in the planning process. What is certain is that Guåhan is expected to shoulder the costs and strains of the tremendous infrastructural burden that is this military expansion. The Government of Guam reports that an influx of foreign workers will pull on local emergency care services, medical facilities, public utilities, transportation networks, and the availability of temporary housing.

DOD and Government of Guam officials have said that the island's infrastructure is inadequate to meet the increased demands of the military buildup. For example, the

wastewater system serving the central part of the island, where a lot of development is already taking place, is at capacity. At a recent congressional hearing, the governor of Guåhan testified that our island's government would need \$6.1 billion to fund infrastructure upgrades. These costs are separate from the DOD's estimated \$15 billion need for plans within the military bases. Therefore, the United States will not cover the costs of Guåhan's needed infrastructure upgrades, and our local government, which has a current deficit of over \$511 million, will have to put our island in massive debt to meet the needs of our administering power.

According to United States law, Guåhan is a possession of the United States but not part of the United States. This is evidenced in the planning process for the US military build-up on Guåhan. There is no consultation with the people of Guåhan and no regard paid to the needs of our people. The governor, lieutenant governor and their staff have provided input in the planning process, but have no real decision-making power in one of the largest decisions ever made for the island that will have rippling effects on future generations of Chamorus.

The hyper-militarization of Guåhan is setting delays to the UN decolonization process. In remaining a Non-Self-Governing Territory, Guåhan loses its right to fight the military build-up and the US can go about its plans with little-to-no opposition. I urge this committee to act immediately as the situation I've described to you is grave. Without action on Guåhan, the UN will have turned its back on colonization in the 21st century. The UN Secretary General himself recently declared there is no room for colonialism in 2008. I urge you to take heed of your mandate or else the Chamoru people will become extinct in our homeland.

The Fourth Committee must give top priority to the fulfillment of our inalienable right to self-determination, as affirmed by General Resolutions 1514 and 1541, and the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. The Fourth Committee must immediately enact the process of decolonization for Guåhan in lieu of the severe, irreversible impacts of US militarization.

This process must include a fully funded and far-reaching education campaign informing all Chamorus from Guåhan of our right to self-determination and decolonization options.

The Fourth Committee must thoroughly investigate the administering power's non-compliance with its treaty obligations under the Charter of the United Nations to promote economic, social, and cultural well-being on Guåhan.

The Fourth Committee must send UN representatives to the island within the next six months to assess the implications of US militarization plans on the decolonization of Guåhan, and the human rights implications of the cumulative impacts of the US military's presence on our island. The Fourth Committee must contact Guåhan leaders and delegates who have presented testimony before this body, and UN funding must be allocated immediately to advance this study. We cannot rely on faulty impact studies conducted by the US, which are used to justify their actions rather than truly assess their impacts on our island.

Finally, the Fourth Committee must comply with the recommendations of other UN agencies, especially the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues, which recently requested an expert seminar be held to examine the impact of the UN decolonization process on indigenous peoples of the Non Self-Governing Territories.

This committee must prioritize collaboration with Chamoru organizations and experts, such as I Nasion Chamoru, Famoksaian, Fuetsan Famalao'an and all those who have provided testimony in the past two decades.

Thank you again for hearing our testimony today. We must work together to ensure the inalienable human right to self-determination for the Chamoru people of Guåhan, and the survival of a Chamoru Nation in our homeland.

*– Sinangan Si Victoria-Lola Montecalvo Leon Guerrero
I Nasion Chamoru*