

Monaeka Flores

Prutehi Litekyan: Save Ritidian, Guam

Hafa adai, I am humbled to join this panel and stand in solidarity with all of you for peace and genuine security on the 75th anniversary of the devastation caused by the United States of America Armed Forces atomic bombs in Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

Before I begin, it is important for me to honor the decades of solidarity work carried out by many including Auntie Hope Crisotbal, Dr. Lisa Linda Natividad, the late senator Angel Santos, Ms. Suzuyo Takazato, Ms. Corazon Fabros, and many others. We are inspired by your enduring commitment for justice. I also want to thank the organizers of this important gathering taking place among the many hardships we are all facing during this global pandemic. I especially want to thank Yayoi Tsuchida and Mizuki Nakamura for your support. Si Yu'os Ma'åse'.

My name is Monaeka Flores and I am a member of Prutehi Litekyan: Save Ritidian a community organization dedicated to the protection of natural and cultural resources in Guam, specifically those located in sites identified for U.S. military live-fire training. We oppose the establishment of any military firing range and stand in solidarity with groups in the Northern Marianas for the prevention of further environmental degradation and destruction on sacred lands, and support the return of ancestral lands. Prutehi Litekyan also stands in solidarity with One Love Take and Takae No Helipad Resident Society, we have done much work together.

The ongoing harms caused by the U.S. military buildup in Guam, with the transfer of Marines from Okinawa to Guam, and the increase of military activities aggravate existing cultural, environmental, and social injustices imposed upon our land and people via U.S. colonization and militarization. There are many parallels between Okinawa and Guam: the indigenous people are currently held under administering powers and have long been deprived of our rights to self-determination. Our islands and peoples were treated as collateral damage during World War II, with large parcels of our most valuable lands seized after the war and occupied under a falsehood of defense and alliance. Our communities have been made more vulnerable to the contamination of our main water sources, contamination from nuclear radiation, agent orange and other harmful toxins, and countless forms violence directly related to the presence of the U.S. military, including illnesses, suppression of indigenous language and cultural practices, introduction of invasive species, high military enlistment rates, and poverty. These issues further complicate our resistance and efforts toward genuine security and peace. The continued occupation of U.S. forces in our homelands of Guam, Okinawa, and Japan is a violation of our indigenous and human rights as well as a violation of constitution of Japan.

The recklessness of the Trump administration and growing tensions between the U.S. and China feed the false justification for the increased military presence in the region. In April, military news outlets reported that while US war ships were stricken with Covid 19, China's ships were mostly unaffected, and an "elephant walk" took place on Andersen Air Force Base in Guam to show the U.S.'s capability to "generate combat airpower at a moment's notice." A July 23 Forbes magazine article reported U.S. defense capabilities with THAAD and patriot missiles solely meant to protect the air force base but not the people of Guam.

In March, the US Navy burdened our community with thousands of sailors from the USS Theodore Roosevelt in local hotels. 1,150 sailors from the ship tested positive. In May, an Air Force unit with 35 confirmed positive cases violated restrictions and visited 30 local businesses, risking spread and harming local economic recovery. There has been no transparency about these cases and military officials report that the cases are "still under investigation".

As we struggled with the outbreak of Covid 19 in Guam, the destruction from U.S. military activity did not stop and the construction of the Live Fire Training Range Complex and marine base continued. This slide shows the wide range of harms from the buildup construction documented in the military's 2015 supplemental environmental impact statement, including significant impacts to water resources, rare and unique species, marine resources, cultural resources, and more. The statement indicated that the option to place the Live-Fire Training Range Complex at Northwest Field and over Litekyan would cause the most harm. The people of Guam have never been at the center of the planning for the relocation and years of protest and opposition continue to go ignored.

This next slide lists some of the destruction and desecration including:

- The clearing of 1,219 acres of limestone forest for constructing the ranges and base
- *6,719,190 ammunitions a year will be fired at the ranges over our main water source*
- New water wells will withdraw 1.2 million gallons of water everyday
- 10 newly listed endangered and threatened species including traditional medicines will be impacted and
- 269 historic properties will be harmed, 63 of which are eligible for the National Registry for Historic Places
- Tax payers money from Japan funds some of this destruction

This an image of the clearing for the firing ranges at Northwest Field, known as Taila'lo'. Military buildup construction has so far revealed a total of 15 sites containing human remains and 28 sites containing historic artifacts. Thirteen buildup projects are complete, 11 are under construction and more than 70 are pending. We were horrified to learn of this destruction and to find out that our ancestors remains were put into paper bags and stored. The public was not

made aware of this or called to comment until after the destruction occurred. The process for public comment is restrictive and adds another layer of injustice.

The surface danger zone will go into effect August 19, restricting public access to these areas while the firing range is in use. The military failed to hold public hearings or provide an environmental impact statement for the danger zone, which will block access to fishing grounds, forests, and further impact families who were forcefully displaced by the U.S. military.

Guam is not merely an extension of the United States where the military can do whatever it wants. These deplorable acts of injustice must be stopped everywhere. I thank you for your time in listening to the points I have shared today. Thank you. Arigato Gozaimasu. Saina Ma'åse'. Ganbaro.