

SENATOR WILLIAM PARKINSON
I MINA'TRENTAI OCHO NA LIHESLATURAN GUAHAN 38TH GUAM LEGISLATURE
TESTIMONY OF GINGER CRUZ, POLICY ADVOCATE
on
RESOLUTION NO. 7-38 (COR)
FEBRUARY 19, 2025

Håfa Adai Senator Parkinson, Honorable Senators of the Guam Legislature,

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on Resolution 7-38, urging the federal government to fully fund the construction and maintenance of civil defense shelters. This isn't just policy—it's about survival.

I commend you for addressing this vital issue that affects the security and well-being of Guam's people, and I appreciate this chance to contribute insights for your consideration.

The Looming Threat

Guam is not just a dot on the map, and we are not just talking hypotheticals. We are 170,000 people with history, culture, land and sea that happen to be the frontline territory in one of the most precarious geopolitical hotspots on the planet, with adversaries building arsenals that, in a flash, could turn Guam from a tropical paradise into a war zone. The question is not "if" we are a target – it is "what are we doing to protect our people."

RAND estimates the probability of nuclear war this century at anywhere from negligible to over 80%. Even if you take the low end, the chance isn't zero. And Guam? We're not just in the blast radius—we're front row center.

China has tripled its missile inventory since 2020, now boasting 3,500 warheads and the launchers to fire them. By 2027—just two years away—Beijing is expected to reach full war readiness. And they are building up their nuclear arsenal with a target of reaching parity with the U.S. and Russia within the next 10 years. North Korea? Their growing missile alliance with Russia is making them more dangerous by the day.

If conflict breaks out, Guam is a prime target. War games run by the Pentagon have confirmed this repeatedly. The DF-26 missile from China—chillingly nicknamed "the Guam Killer"—is designed specifically to strike us. The DF-27, a hypersonic upgrade, will be even harder to intercept.

That means we could have as little as 10 minutes to react. Ten minutes. Long enough to know what's coming, but not long enough to do much about it unless we're prepared.

If struck with a conventional warhead, destruction would be concentrated at impact points, likely leveling everything within half a mile. Fortified, easily accessible shelters could make a real difference for those on the perimeter, but only if people got to them in time.

If hit with a nuclear warhead, the devastation would be far worse wiping out everything from the impact zone up to half the island or more. Radiation fallout would require extended sheltering with food, water, power, ventilation, and medical supplies needed until radiation had degraded and outside help could arrive.

The Benefits of Shelter

Current planning paradigms say Guam would need 5-20 square feet per person in shelters scattered throughout population centers—within a few minutes of where people live and work. The best protection?

- Full-scale underground shelters with ventilation and power.
- Reinforced interior rooms in existing buildings (no windows, thick walls).
- Earth barriers—a foot of earth protection reducing exposure to 1/30; three feet, 1/1000.

But the challenge is the cost and trade-offs.

Missile Defense Alone Is Not Enough

In a time of government cost-cutting and competing priorities, the most effective use of federal dollars to protect Guam's civilian population is the 360-degree missile defense system. Stopping missiles before they reach us provides the highest level of security. Full funding and rapid implementation of this system should be priority one. But let's be clear. No system is foolproof. Ask Ukraine. Ask Israel. Despite the latest technologies, some missiles are going to get through, which brings us to the question of civil defense shelters.

The 360-degree missile defense system is still essentially in the planning phase—at least a decade away from completion with a total cost of \$10 billion. Initial funding has barely trickled in \$1.5 billion in FY2024, with another \$1.8 billion anticipated for FY2025, and already, we're seeing site reductions from 22 to 16 with discussion of potentially more cuts to come. This gives us a good indication about Washington's willingness to invest in Guam's protection.

And keep in mind, as part of the DOD budget, the focus is on military personnel and assets while at the same time protecting civilians. Budgeting for actual civilian defense is still an afterthought.

What History and the World Teaches Us

If you're looking for a country that's done civilian protection right, look to Switzerland. Since the Cold War in the 1960's, they've maintained enough shelters for their entire population – and are the only country that can say that. But even they have let their network fall into disrepair.

Around the same time in the 60's, the U.S. also made an effort—spending \$1.7 billion on fallout shelters, repurposing basements and parking garages. Those old, faded signs with the circle and three inverted yellow triangles? They're relics of a time when the federal government made the attempt to prioritize civilian protection and fear of a Soviet attack animated federal actions. Instructions were handed out to families across the mainland telling them how to reinforce spaces in homes and what supplies to have on hand. Drills were held in classrooms.

Fast forward to today and the most significant shelters built by the federal government are only for high level officials for continuity of government. This has led to a rise in the number of so-called “preppers”. It is estimated that over 5% of the mainland population has planned for some type of shelter in their homes with provisions to sustain them off the grid for 30 days. There has also been a rise in luxurious survival condos and doomsday bunkers constructed by private companies that in one case , for a cool \$300 million, can house 625 people in style.

Japan, facing similar threats from China and North Korea, has explored using underground spaces and reinforced buildings, and South Korea has smartphone maps showing locations of dual use bunkers, but comprehensive shelter coverage for civilian populations remains elusive.

Today, some European nations—Norway, for instance—are revisiting shelter infrastructure in response to Russia's aggression in Ukraine. But the debate always boils down to the same question: Do you spend the money on missile defense, or do you have sufficient resources to also build shelters for when defense fails?

The global lesson? Nations that prioritize shelters ensure their people have a fighting chance.

A Realistic Path Forward

Now let's do a reality check. Building bomb shelters from scratch is an expensive, time-consuming endeavor, and very hard to sustain. In order to protect 170,000 people spread out over 212 square miles, we would need multiple sites constructed – including land acquisition, equipment, construction, and maintenance. This would require billions in funds.

It's unlikely the federal government will hand over these billions just for Guam to dig bunkers, especially on top of the billions allocated to missile defense.

But that doesn't mean we do nothing. We need a pragmatic approach:

1. **Start with what we have** – Ask the federal government to conduct an immediate study to identify existing buildings that could have sections reinforced for shelters. Guam is already built to withstand typhoons and earthquakes – we have an advantage. Most of our homes and buildings are made of reinforced concrete. Underground garages, concrete government buildings, commercial basements, reinforcing a room in homes — let’s be smart about this.
2. **Stockpile essentials** – Secure funding for 60-90 days of emergency food, water, and medical supplies, and work with island residents on maintaining reasonable stockpiles. After an attack, it will take time to for help to get here and we would need to sustain our civilian population until it does, for any type of emergency.
3. **Invest in dual-use facilities** – Instead of asking for bomb shelters, consider asking for community centers, gyms, hospitals, warehouses and the like that could be built to serve a purpose in peacetime and double as shelters in emergencies. These investments are easier to sell politically and practically. Norway does this. It allows us to get use out of constructed facilities now, while also providing peace of mind for the unthinkable.
4. **Public Information** – We absolutely have to work with the federal government to better disseminate information that will provide island residents with information on what to prepare for in the unlikely event that the worst happens. Any new construction on island should at least consider space for emergency shelter use, and Guam residents should be aware of what to do in case of emergency and what minimum supplies to have on hand. Even better if we all had a blueprint to make a section of existing homes and businesses into shelters with federal financial support to get it done.

The Right Terminology, The Right Ask

This isn’t just about war—it’s about resilience. I believe we can refine our request to seek funding for solutions that will be taken seriously from the above four points.

I would also recommend the following technical considerations:

1. Use current terms. “Air Raid Shelters” is outdated. The modern terminology is Civil Defense Shelters, CBRN Shelters (Chemical, Biological, Radiological, Nuclear), and Fallout Shelters. In our case, Civil Defense Shelters would wrap it all up into one.
2. Align the resolution’s tone – Conveying pride in our history and tradition of robust military service without leaning on past injustices or lecturing Uncle Sam strengthens our case.
3. Clarify federal roles – Congress authorizes multi-year funding while the Executive Branch engages in studies and planning. Keep the ask clear for each branch of government.

Final Thought

Preparedness is power. Here are three resources every policymaker—and every Guam resident—could benefit from reading:

- [REMM: Radiation Emergency Medical Management](#)
- [FEMA 72-Hour Nuclear Detonation Response Guide](#)
- [IFRC Nuclear, Radiological Emergency Guide](#)

Guam is at risk. The time to act is now.

Submitted with respect,

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