

Testimony of Leland Bettis
Resolution No. 7-38 (COR)
February 19, 2025

Håfa Adai Honorable Members of the Guam Legislature.

My name is Leland Bettis, I am a resident of Hagåtña. I am a Director of the Guam-based non-profit, The Pacific Center for Island Security. I am here to testify in favor of Resolution 7-38.

First let me extend my appreciation to Senator Parkinson for putting in motion the Guam Legislature's deliberation on this important matter. For all the talk about defending Guam, this is the first policy recognition—in either Guam or the U.S.—that puts security for the civilian population in focus.

To put Guam's current security risk in context, all you need to do is look at the U.S. military's proposed Enhanced Integrated Air and Missile Defense System. This proposal makes clear that military installations in Guam—and our island as a whole—can no longer be considered a sanctuary from an adversary's conventional weapons attacks. Bases in Guam are not just places that can project US power in conflict, they are also targets. This is a fundamental change Guam's risk profile in conflict.

The military is adjusting to this changing risk profile. Not only are they proposing new air and missile defenses for Guam, but they are also spending billions of dollars to prepare airfields in Tinian, Palau and Yap on the assumption that during conflict there will be periods when airfields in Guam are not available. Two recent studies ([Stimson](#), [Hudson](#)) make clear none of the US operated airfields in the region are going to be safe in the event of a conflict. And while these studies make the case for tactical and strategic changes, these are not likely to lessen the impact of targeting and neither of them address civilian security.

Guam needs to be engaged in a honest conversation about civilian security in a conflict that the military is preparing for. Claims that a missile defense system is “[to defend the entirety of Guam](#)” rings hollow. Statements from local military commanders that the island could “[sleep well at night, you're gonna be fine](#)” and that “[Andersen Air Force Base is on the watch, and we got this](#)” don't reflect the level of risk preparedness that the military assumes. The pre-canned statements from JRM that the military is “[keenly postured to defend United States equities and interests in this region from any adversary](#)” are not assurances of security.

The absence of planning for the civilian community is particularly unsettling given what is occurring in other hot spots in the region. Last year, [Taiwanese officials revealed plans for](#)

[the storage of critical food supplies](#) in case they are cut off from the outside world. A few days later, in the largest joint U.S.-Japan military exercise of the year, [U.S. and Japanese military practiced the evacuation of civilians from the outer islands of Okinawa](#). Clearly, others in the region are planning for civilian impacts in the event of conflict—including help from the U.S. military. Meanwhile Guam is only getting claims of a military defense that strain credibility and leave the civilian community unprepared and defenseless. If the military plans—as a former head of INDOPACOM said—that it will have to “fight for Guam,” the people of Guam deserve more than incredible claims of defense. Moreover, security must be defined in terms of human security and not just securing military assets. The people of Guam deserve no less.

Yes Senator Parkinson, planning and funding for shelters and food security—something that is a basic element of security in Japan, Taiwan and Korea—needs to be implemented in Guam. If U.S. military installations in Guam make us a target, then the military needs to provide us some cover.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on Resolution 7-38. I’ll be happy answer any questions you may have.