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Administration Pursues Return of Lands under Federal Control

Hagåtña, Guam – Underscoring the importance of being a responsible partner in the stewardship of unused federal lands, Governor Lou Leon Guerrero is requesting the U.S. Navy to return excess lands to the Government of Guam.

Governor Leon Guerrero sent a letter to Secretary of the Navy Richard V. Spencer, noting that the Navy has returned properties to Guam on numerous occasions beginning in 1950. Notable returns also occurred as a result of the 1993 and 1995 Base Realignment and Closure Acts and the implementation of the Guam Excess Lands Act (Public Law 103-339, 108 Stat. 3116) in 1994.

“The 2019 National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) offers another opportunity for the Navy to return excess land. This is land that we have identified to be in excess, unused, or unnecessary for the Marine Relocation—land that can benefit our people through their return to the original landowners and through cultivation and agriculture, cultural and environmental preservation, economic development, affordable housing, and education,” Governor Leon Guerrero said.

The 2019 NDAA provides that “the Secretary of the Navy shall maintain and update regularly an inventory of all land parcels located on Guam which meet the following conditions:

- (A) The parcels are currently owned by the United States Government and are under the administrative jurisdiction of the Department of the Navy.
- (B) The Secretary has determined or expects to determine the parcels to be excess to the needs of the Department of the Navy.
- (C) Under Federal law, including Public Law 106-504 (commonly known as the ‘Guam Omnibus Opportunities Act’ 40 U.S.C. 521 note), the parcels are eligible to be transferred to the territorial government.”

The law also allows the Governor of Guam to seek the return of excess federal lands by specifying a proposed public benefit or public purpose in writing to the Secretary of the Navy. Based on a June 2019 report of Potentially Releasable Federal Lands prepared by the

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Guam Economic Development Authority (GEDA), Governor Leon Guerrero is requesting to add 2,596 acres of terrestrial land and 17,031 acres of submerged land to the Navy's excess land inventory.

While the 2019 GEDA report does not specify public use for each land parcel, the Governor assured the Secretary of the Navy that she is committed to utilizing each of the properties for the public benefit of the island. The Governor also advised Secretary Spencer that she may seek the return of additional lands in the future.

"It is my hope and faith that your office will seriously consider my request along the lines of balancing both military and civilian needs for limited land resources on Guam as an integral facet of the One Guam policy," concluded Governor Leon Guerrero.

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