

Remarks for Governor Lou Leon Guerrero
Defense Leadership Forum
2023 Pacific Defense Contracting Summit
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Honolulu, Hawaii

Aloha! And Hafa Adai!

It is an honor to stand before you today at the Pacific Defense Contracting Summit. It is right that we come together to discuss the Indo-Pacific as a critical theater for National Security. The pressing challenges across the Indo-Pacific are real and relevant. I am confident that this forum will allow all of us to share strategies to ensure the protection and security of our people. Before I share major updates for Guam projects, I want to take a moment to reflect on Guam's history – a history that has shaped us and continues to inspire our commitment and prosperity.

In the 1800s, Guam nestled in the heart of the Pacific, was a beacon of trade and cultural exchange. Our island's strategic location made it a hub for commerce, connecting East and West. We were a place where cultures converged, ideas blossomed, and the exchange of goods and knowledge enriched our lives.

However, this period was not without its challenges. The Spanish Occupation of Guam during that time brought both benefits and hardships. People were subjected to the rule of a colonial power and we were almost an annihilated race but we learned the power of resilience and adaptation. Our people emerged from this period with a deeper appreciation for our unique cultural heritage and identity.

But it was during the dark days of World War II that Guam's history took a dramatic turn. We became the first U.S. Territory to be invaded and occupied by enemy forces. Our island was on the frontlines of the ravages of war, and the scars of conflict still exist in the hearts of many Chamorros. Yet, in those trying times, we demonstrated unwavering courage and unity.

Those of you who have knowledge of our history and those that have lived Guam's history, are keenly aware that our heritage is marked by resilience, adaptation, and unwavering resolve. We have confronted a multitude of challenges both in the past and present day. Yet we not only persist but flourish as a community that remains committed to regional peace and prosperity.

As we are all aware, Guam, given its strategic importance, now confronts a set of security challenges that are distinct and unprecedented compared to the past. However, we remain resolute in our commitment to prevent history from repeating itself. As Governor of Guam, I am deeply concerned for the security of my island and our nation. It is imperative that we confront

these concerns with unwavering vigilance and foresight. This is why I persistently collaborate with the leadership at the Pentagon, the Indo Pacific Command, Joint Region Marianas, and the United States Congress to address these emerging threats.

We, the people of Guam, are fully aware that the Indo Pacific is the priority theater for the furtherance of U.S. interests, ideals and security. The Indo Pacific is broadly identified in the National Security Strategy and National Defense Strategy for growth across the economic-energy-security and health technology nexus. There is no doubt that there are significant gaps in comprehensive civilian and military medical services across the region. Beyond our U.S. treaties and security mechanisms, I recognize that Medical Diplomacy is not only an essential pillar for strengthening U.S. allies and partners, it is a critical one. There is no denying that Guam is arguably the most consequential territory within the Indo Pacific for National Security and Missile Defense, and medical services are essential to that security.

Our strength resides within our people, our history, our culture, our courage, and our health. That strength can be advanced with regional Human Health security... **this is my number one priority.** We are uniquely positioned to be the regional center of excellence for medical services and human health and my strategic vision for healthcare is one that is consistent with the needs of my people as well as the National Security strategy. Recently I met with my friend Admiral Chris (Lung) Aquilino and we want to breathe new life into enhancing medical services on Guam. I know that de-risking his theater campaign with advanced medical care is paramount. Together, we can design and build human health security to support our people of Guam, as well as a steady state peacetime, contingency, and crisis operations. Beyond defense systems hardware, Human health security is certainly a strategic attention item for my Government, INDOPACOM, the Department of Defense, U.S. Congress.

This leads me into other Guam priorities in infrastructure. A robust modern infrastructure is essential to both our economic growth and our ability to respond to emerging security threats. As we invest in our infrastructure, we also strengthen our resilience.

Guam is presently engaged in a range of road reconstruction and rehabilitation projects, with federal funds from the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act and Defense Access Road funds. With millions of dollars dedicated to these endeavors, my administration is taking an assertive approach to ensure that Guam's infrastructure to include water, power, telecom and cybersecurity remain robust enough to support the island's long term development, our economic objectives, and the ongoing military growth. These infrastructure investments will bolster Guam's position as the most capable location in the northwest pacific to handle investments of all sizes. We seek to align our efforts to improve capacity at our ports of entry.

Additionally, Guam's strategic location has made it an ideal area to route transpacific submarine cables. Last year, a local telecom company broke ground on the construction of a 31,000 square foot data facility and landing station that can accommodate up to six submarine cables.

Other notable initiatives that my administration has been working on is the Broadband Equity Access Deployment (BEAD) program. We long recognized the needs for improved broadband infrastructure on Guam, and this program will help to make significant progress in bridging the digital divide and provide equitable access for all. The recent devastation of Typhoon Mawar and the COVID-19 pandemic highlighted the critical importance of reliable high-speed internet for remote work, telehealth, and distance learning. This will be definitely be an economic drive for our island.

In this very dynamic geopolitical environment we face, the defense and security of our island is also dependent on our ability to sustain ourselves as a people. That is why we are committed to sustainability efforts. The United Nations emphasizes that we are in a critical 10-year window to act on the most significant global sustainability challenges before 2030. In 2019, Guam was invited to join an international community of island leaders and became a founding member of the Local2030 islands network to advance local and global sustainable development goals. We have adopted the Guam Green Growth Initiative and established the G3 working groups through numerous partnerships developing a framework that is focused on:

- Healthy and Prosperous Communities
- Educated, Capable, and Compassionate Island
- Sustainable Homes, Utilities, and Transportation
- Thriving Natural Resources
- Sustainable Alliance

Finally, it is important to note that when addressing security concerns, we must not forget our brothers and sisters in the other Pacific Islands. I have always said that our Pacific ocean does not stand as a barrier, rather it is a bridge that unites us as a region. As a matter of fact, numerous projects you will be discussing throughout the summit will involve investments not only on Guam; it will include investments right here in Hawaii, the Northern Marianas Islands, the Federated States of Micronesia, RMI and Palau. Our islands share common challenges that must be taken into consideration which include climate change, workforce development, economic stability, transportation, logistics and digitalization. All of these challenges must be addressed through the lens of regional security.

I know that some of you may be saying wow Governor that's a lot of information and sounds like a lot of work. But I say to you, that the regional security priorities for Guam and our allies in the Pacific cannot be overstated.

As we gather at this summit, let us remember the lessons of our history, the sacrifices of our ancestors and those who served, and the responsibility we bear for our future. I invite all of you who wish to do business on Guam, to learn about our people, our culture, and our heritage. Learn about our home-grown small businesses who stand ready to partner and support our regional security.

Guam has been and continues to be a beacon of hope for sustaining our peace and prosperity in the region. We are where America's day begins; we are at the intersection of trade, security and diplomacy that ensures a Free and Open Indo-Pacific.

WE ARE THE HOMELAND!!!

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Thank you, Si yu'os ma'ase and Mahalo!

I have members from my team here with me who can answer questions you may have...my Director for Public Works Vince Arriola, the General Manager of Guam International Airport John Quinata together with some of his Board members, Ed Birn, Director of Administration and Vera Topasna, my liaison to the Department of Defense. If you could please stand. We also have some businesses from Guam in attendance.