



I MINA'TRENTAI SIETTE NA LIHESLATURAN GUAHAN | 37TH GUAM LEGISLATURE

Office of Senator Frank F. Blas Jr.

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September 5, 2024

Honorable Dwayne T.D. San Nicolas
Chairman,
Committee on Emergency Response, Military and Veteran Affairs,
Border Safety and Mayors Council
DNA Building, STE 407/408
238 Archbishop Flores St.
Hagåtña, Guam 96910

Dear Senator,

Buenas yan Hafa Adai! I write to you regarding the postponement of the committed oversight hearing on the audit findings for the Guam Office of Homeland Security/Civil Defense and ask that it be conducted later this month but no later than the end of October. My office has been informed that the reason for the postponement of the September 9th hearing was in consideration for the recent loss within the organization, and while mindful of this, the matter for the oversight needs to be addressed without further delay.

As a reminder, the Office of Public Accountability requested for an immediate hearing to present their findings of an audit they conducted on Guam Homeland Security/Office of Civil Defense. The OPA reported that other than a Federal Emergency Management Administration (FEMA) study that called to question over Thirty-Four Million Dollars (\$34,000,000) in unallowable or questioned costs, there was also over Eight Million Dollars (\$8,000,000) in unreimbursed expenditures. What is just as disturbing is the possibility of the substantial loss of federal funding that is necessary for our island's emergency management operations as the subject entities receive no direct local appropriation.

It is unfortunate that this matter was not addressed prior to or during the Fiscal Year 2025 budget process as the findings both in the FEMA and OPA audits identified extreme deficiencies and the need for immediate action to avert a disastrous impact to our island's ability to respond to a natural or manmade catastrophic event. Unlike other events that could be foreseeable or predicted, the situations that we rely on GHS/OCD to respond to and manage could occur at any time. We should be thankful but not ignorant to the fact that nothing has happened but could happen before the missteps are resolved.

It has been shared with my office that the true reason for the delay in conducting the oversight hearing is to give GHS/OCD extra time to address the deficiencies and questioned costs with FEMA. While acknowledging this effort, it must be recognized that the concerns have been long standing and ignored until all options and considerations were exhausted. As such, and with the hope that what the people of Guam will have to pay back to the federal government will be

greatly reduced, it is still our inherent duty to demand transparency, accountability, and adherence to how money is spent by our government. It is for this responsibility that I again fervently ask that the oversight hearing be scheduled sooner than later.

Thank you for your time and, in advance, your consideration.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'FF Blas, Jr.', with a stylized flourish at the end.

FRANK F. BLAS, JR.
Senator

cc: All Senators, 37th Guam Legislature
All Media