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## Calvo firm in opposition to buildup

Manny Cruz | The Guam Daily Post 7 hrs ago



'NO CHANGE': Gov. Eddie Calvo announced he would no longer support the military buildup on Guam until the issue of H-2 workers resolved, in this April 6 file photo. The governor's spokeswoman recently said there was "no change in his stance." Post file photo

The governor remains firm in his stance against the military buildup – at least until island businesses can regain access to foreign H-2B laborers.

On April 7, Gov. Eddie Calvo left the business community stunned by his sudden retraction of support for military buildup-related projects, due primarily to a denial of practically all H-2B worker visa petitions over the past year.

"So, with a heavy heart, I am against this buildup until there are changes. I cannot see more construction activity going into that base," he said. "I just started shaking the tree."

Governor's spokeswoman Oya Ngirairikl said on Tuesday there was "no change in his stance."

### **'Ensure that Guam isn't left behind'**

Earlier this week, Calvo published an editorial in The Guam Daily Post elaborating on his perspective only his fervent opposition has waned.

"I want the buildup to happen but I also want to ensure that Guam isn't left behind," Calvo wrote. "We have gone from more than 1,300 foreign laborers to 178 foreign laborers in about a year.

"The federal government's refusal to work with us has caused the cost of residential projects to double."

The governor's position appears to be conditional, and his administration's support of the buildup depends entirely on whether the federal government will improve its handling of foreign worker visa

Sen. Frank B. Aguon Jr., chairman of the Legislature's military buildup committee, said the governor could have stated his position differently.

However, Aguon said, "the fact remains that there are those of us outside of the military fences who feel the pain resulting from the diminishing approvals of H-2B visas, and in the not-so-distant future our economy will be negatively impacted."

In this week's editorial, Calvo said he is creating a task force to hash out "mid- and long-term solutions" to the visa issue.

What that could mean, however, is unclear. The Post reached out to the Office of the Governor for further comment, with no response as of press time.

The Guam Chamber of Commerce, the largest organization of private employers and businesses on the island, has called the governor's announcement a surprise. But denouncing the support of the buildup was not an "ideal route to take."

## Difficult questions

The governor's change of heart is the latest in a series of recent tensions that have forced some residents to question the nature of Guam's relation to the United States.

Chief Judge Frances Tydingco-Gatewood of the District Court of Guam entered a judgment on March 9 in favor of Arnold "Dave" Davis, striking down Guam's plebiscite law allowing only the island's native inhabitants to vote for Guam's future political status.

The attorney general has since filed an appeal in the case.

"I have been a staunch defender and supporter of the buildup," Calvo said earlier this week. "This is because I firmly believed in the One Guam approach and trusted that the federal government would keep its promise to us, and they haven't."