

Gov. Calvo to US: Stop and re-evaluate military buildup

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(Photo: Shawn Raymundo)

Gov. Eddie Calvo wants military construction on Guam to stop, citing the ongoing shortage of skilled temporary foreign labor on island.

Federal immigration officials for more than a year have been denying nearly all requests by Guam businesses to use foreign labor under the H-2B visa program.

A foreign work force that exceeded 1,000 a few years ago now sits a less than 100, prompting local businesses last year to file a lawsuit over the denials.

Calvo in May said he no longer can support the military buildup as a result. On Friday, he upped the stakes, calling for an end to military construction projects unless the issue is resolved.

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Calvo is asking the Department of Defense to halt further military construction until there's a reassessment of the buildup's Record of Decision and Programmatic Agreement, which sets guidelines for the buildup.

The military has said it will need a large force of foreign labor to complete its projects here. And the shortage of foreign labor has had a ripple effect, impacting the feasibility and cost of any construction projects, military or otherwise.

"Unfortunately, this H-2B denial, which started with the bureaucrats of the Obama Administration, continues to linger. In so doing, it is not only hindering our island's economy but I believe it is risking our island and our nation's security as well," Calvo said.

There has been no resolution to the visa denials, despite two years of communication with the U.S. Departments of Labor, Defense, Homeland Security and Citizenship and Immigration Services, a release from the governor's office states.

"The lack of a complete solution sends a message to the people of Guam that we are NOT partners in this movement forward," Calvo said.


He wrote to U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services acting Director James W. McCament, citing the harm caused by the labor loss, including: inflated construction costs; a debilitating Guam Memorial Hospital; and fewer bids for military and civilian projects.

"I consider this a clear and present danger to the safety and health of the people of Guam," Calvo said.

The Guam Legislature also [passed a resolution this week](http://www.guampdn.com/story/news/2017/09/26/resolution-calls-delay-construction-firing-ranges/702540001/) ([/story/news/2017/09/26/resolution-calls-delay-construction-firing-ranges/702540001/](http://www.guampdn.com/story/news/2017/09/26/resolution-calls-delay-construction-firing-ranges/702540001/)), calling for a pause on the live-fire training range complex, to be built on Northwest Field at Andersen Air Force Base, pending further study.

Senators on Tuesday voted 11-3 in favor of the resolution, with Sen. Régine Biscoe Lee, D-Dededo, absent during roll call. On Thursday, Lee asked for a revote on the resolution to put her support on the record. Sen. Mary Torres, R-Santa Rita, who initially voted against the resolution, changed her vote Thursday, resulting in it passing by a vote of 13-2.

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