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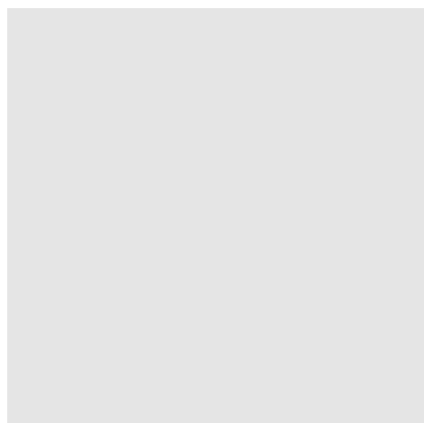
## 4,000 foreign workers authorized

Laborers to work on military-related projects

Kevin Kerrigan and Gaynor D. Daleno | The Guam Daily Post 8 hrs ago



CONSTRUCTION: A crew works on a project in Dededo. The number of H-2B workers on Guam has fallen and has jeopardized local projects. Post file photo



Now that President Donald Trump has signed the National Defense Authorization Act into law, Guam is authorized to hire up to 4,000 foreign workers a year, for the next several years, to meet the needs of construction projects related to the military buildup.

The law also authorizes \$354 million for military construction projects on Guam next year.

Greg Massey

The new law addresses a shortage of skilled construction workers on Guam, primarily for the construction of a Marine Corps Base on existing military land in Finegayan, Dededo, near Andersen Air Force Base.

"Notably, the law now provides (the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services) with flexibility in applying of the H-2B visa program on Guam, and it permits up to 4,000 visas per year to be approved for military and civilian projects directly related to, or associated with, the Marine relocation," said Guam Delegate Madeleine Bordallo. About 4,700 Marines are being moved from Okinawa to Guam.

USCIS and the Trump administration have up to 120 days to implement this law, she added.

### **'Only half the answer'**

Gov. Eddie Calvo said, however, the new law "is only half the answer" to the ongoing labor crisis.

The new law "doesn't help Guamanians who are trying to build homes or local businesses trying to expand their stores, restaurants, or hotels," according to a statement yesterday from Adelup.

"Does it help Joe Cruz build his house in Merizo?" asked Greg Massey, the administrator for the Guam Department of Labor's Alien Labor Processing and Certification Division. "No, it doesn't. It doesn't help build hospitals, it doesn't help build hotel rooms and it doesn't help build any infrastructure," he added.

"It really just takes care of the military," Massey said. "It is not the solution to the problem."

The governor and Massey also pointed out that the provision to allow H-2B workers for inside-the-fence projects violates the military's commitment to the "One Guam" approach toward the

military expansion.

### **'Two classes of H-2B workers'**

Most importantly, the governor said, "it fails us" by not allowing "the critical labor necessary" to complete important school and hospital projects that are now on hold. Foreign workers on H-2B visas used to supplement the local labor force.

"They've created two classes of H-2B workers now," Massey said. "The regular H-2B, and then your military H-2B."

There are now only 39 H-2B workers on Guam, he said. Two years ago, there were more than 1,600. USCIS has not approved any H-2B worker petitions since October 2016.

"We now have a 0 percent approval rate" for any H-2B applications, Massey said.

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