

DoD infrastructure partnerships continue in anticipation of buildup

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(Photo: Kyla P Mora/PDN)

So far this year, 10 military buildup projects valued at \$484 million have been ordered or completed on Guam, and multiple future contract awards are projected during the next two years, Joint Region Marianas and U.S. Naval Forces Rear Adm. Shoshana Chatfield said Wednesday in an address to the Guam Contractors Association.

Chatfield spoke at the GCA monthly membership luncheon on the topic "Building ONE-GUAM For The Future" at the Hyatt Regency Guam.

Chatfield touched on a number of joint ventures in which the U.S. Department of Defense has partnered to improve Guam infrastructure: improving consumer water supply in the north, signing an agreement in May to harness and produce solar energy for Guam's power grid, and collaborating on environmental preservation.

According to Chatfield, from 2010 to 2016 the Defense Department contributed \$83 million toward "One Guam" projects that support Guam infrastructure.

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The military also is currently working with the University of Guam, Guam Department of Education, Guam Waterworks Authority, and other GovGuam entities on environmental projects valued at more than \$20 million, Chatfield said.

"We have upwards of 50 or more people actively involved in environmental projects," Chatfield said. "We are also on pace with our net negative agreement signed in 2011, which forces the Navy to use resources more efficiently."

Chatfield touched briefly on the H-2B temporary worker visa shortage, which has wiped out a large portion of skilled workers available to contractors and the construction industry on Guam.

In Oct. 2016, a dozen Guam companies sued the federal government following mass rejections of H-2B temporary worker visas, which has caused a major labor crunch as the island gears up for the military buildup, which will relocate 4,100 Marines from Okinawa to Guam.

Chatfield was unable to offer specifics on the progress of the H-2B issue at the federal level.

"I know that topic weighs heavily on you. That decision rests with our government officials back in Washington," Chatfield said. "I'll just say that as a regional commander, I'm very active in providing information up my chain of command to advise on my work and what I see in the community. I can't really be much more specific than that except to tell you that it falls very heavily on my mind to make sure that we have a good match between our works requirement and the organization here putting out that information to let you know what's expected and what's coming."

Chatfield also urged military contractors to begin the transition process now to the new DBIDS identification card system, which will be required for base access beginning Aug. 14.

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