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Military buildup projects not halted by H-2B denials

DoD approves funding for cultural repository

Neil Pang | The Guam Daily Post Apr 27, 2017 Updated 9 hrs ago



Gary Kuwabara, from the Department of Defense's Office of Economic Adjustment, recommended the Government of Guam be asked for advice on how to handle artifacts discovered during the buildup. Joint Region Marianas held its annual Marine Corps Buildup Program Agreement Workshop at the Guam Museum April 27. David Castro/The Guam Daily Post

"Anything we can do to preserve Guam's cultural heritage, that's one of our main focuses."
– Maj. Tim Patrick, public affairs officer, Marine Corps Activity Guam

Marine Corps representatives confirmed no military buildup project has been adversely affected or

delayed by the recent trend of H-2B visa denials for temporary foreign workers.

A few weeks ago, Gov. Eddie Calvo announced his withdrawal of support of the proposed Marine Corps base, over concerns that the continued decline in available construction workers could negatively affect construction projects in the civilian community. The governor has unsuccessfully asked federal immigration authorities to help Guam with the H-2B visas for construction workers.

Joint Region Marianas Public Affairs Officer Lt. Tim Gorman confirmed Calvo's statements and position have been conveyed up the Department of Defense's chain of command.

"At the end of the day, we're still committed to the One Guam pillar," Maj. Tim Patrick said, referring to a commitment by the military to work with the local government. "The efforts that we worked toward have not changed at all ... we're still looking to move forward. Anything we can do to preserve Guam's cultural heritage, that's one of our main focuses."

On that front, Patrick, who serves as public affairs officer for Marine Corps Activity Guam, spoke to the media about the latest accomplishments of the programmatic agreement through 2016, which includes the successful funding of the Guam Cultural Repository.

Patrick announced federal funding for the repository of cultural artifacts and ancestral remains was authorized under the 2017 National Defense Authorization Act, and that efforts were underway to begin development of the project alongside Guam's State Historic Preservation Office.

Once complete, the state-of-the-art facility will be capable of storing archeological findings unearthed by local, federal and private entities and will be managed by Guam SHPO until – as in the case of ancestral remains – those entities can organize proper reburial of remains.

With the funding now secure, Al Borja, environmental director of Marine Corps Activity Guam, reported that in terms of selecting a location for the repository and beginning construction efforts, the rest is up to the governor and the Department of Defense's Office of Economic Adjustment.

"Our role was to seek the funding," Borja said. "We were able to get the funding, so I'll let the process work itself out."

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