

President signs NDAA with \$355M For Guam military construction and H-2B provision

By **Clynt Ridgell** - December 13, 2017



The new NDAA extends the H-2B national visa cap exemption for Guam from 2019 until 2023

Guam – H-2B worker visa relief is on the way, after President Donald Trump Tuesday signed in law, the 2018 National Defense Authorization Act, or 'NDAA. The president, as expected, signed the NDAA in a White House ceremony, clearing the way for key actions and spending affecting Guam's military build-up and defenses, and those of the nation.

The new NDAA extends the H-2B national visa cap exemption for Guam from 2019 until 2023, but keeps a Senate cap of up to 4-thousand such visas per year, and only for build-up connect work. A House version sought by Guam Congresswoman Madeleine Bordallo, did not cap H-2B visas for Guam and would have allowed H-2B workers to supplement civilian hospital staffs.

Bordallo's office says the enacted H-2B provision will take effect in 120-days. It follows a long fight between Guam and USCIS over the agency's visa freeze. Something Governor Eddie Calvo brought up to President Trump directly.

Trump signed the NDAA at the White House, surrounded by top military officials, Vice-President Mike Pence and congressional leaders on defense. President Trump said, "It approves missile defense capabilities, as we continue our campaign to create maximum pressure on the vile dictatorship in North Korea. It upgrades our ground combat vehicles, allows for the purchase of new, joint strike fighter aircraft, and paves the way for beautiful new, Virginia Class submarines, the finest in the world. The NDAA increases the size of the American armed forces for the first time in seven-years and it provides our military service members with their largest pay increase in eight-years."

The FY '18 defense bill authorizes almost \$355-million for military construction on Guam, including almost 41-million for Phase II replacement housing at Andersen Air Force Base. That was a big win for Guam and Bordallo, a House NDAA negotiator, since the Senate originally left out the housing money. Although the Secretary of Defense must still certify there's a sufficient workforce to build the new housing.

Other funding items include an aircraft maintenance hangar, a corrosion control hangar, Navy commercial tie-in hardening, a water-well field and a truck loading facility.

The new NDAA also requires a report Bordallo sought, on ship maintenance capability in the Pacific and it requires the Navy Secretary to submit a review, assessing ship repair options that include Guam dry dock facilities.

FY18 Defense Bill Signed into Law

Washington, D.C. – Congresswoman Madeleine Z. Bordallo today announced that President Donald Trump has signed into law the National Defense Authorization Act for fiscal year 2018.

The FY18 defense bill fully authorizes \$354.6 million for military construction projects for Guam to support the ongoing progress on the Marine realignment as well as current operations which include the hardening of select military facilities. (table of Military Construction projects

authorized below)

The law includes a provision championed by Congresswoman Bordallo to provide the U.S. Customs and Immigration Services with flexibility to provide up to 4,000 H-2B temporary workers per year to support construction or facility services that are directly connected to, or associated with, the Marine realignment. This would enable civilian infrastructure funded by the federal government, the Government of Guam, or non-governmental sources that are being done, in part, because of the increased number of military personnel and military families moving to Guam. USCIS has up to 120 days to implement this provision.

“Today President Trump signed into law the fiscal year 2018 defense bill, which includes provisions important to Guam. Notably the law now provides USCIS 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. USCIS and the Trump Administration have up to 120 days to implement this law, and I look forward to building on this provision for our civilian needs. While this was a critical first step, I will continue working in Congress and with our partners in the Administration to ensure that Guam has an adequate workforce to meet labor demands.”

Fiscal Year 2018 Military Construction Authorization for Guam

Service	Project	Cost
Navy	Aircraft Maintenance Hangar #2	75,233,000
Navy	Corrosion Control Hangar	66,747,000
Navy	MALS Facilities	49,431,000
Navy	Navy-Commercial Tie-in Hardening	37,180,000
Navy	Water Well Field	56,088,000
Navy	Replace Andersen Housing PH2	40,875,000
Defense Logistics Agency	Construct Truck Load and Unload Facility	23,900,000
Air Force Reserve	Reserve Medical Training Facility	5,200,000
		\$ 354,654,000

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Comments

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