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Relocation of Okinawa Marines to Guam will proceed

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The long-planned relocation of thousands of Marines from Okinawa to Guam IS going to happen. That was the reassurance from Admiral Soshana Chatfield, who says the U.S. and Japan have set aside billions of dollars, and remain committed to moving the troops here.

Speaking before the Guam Contractors Association, Admiral Chatfield says it may seem like its taking a long time, but the marines are coming, saying, "We're really still in the beginning phases of it. We're expecting to see some construction contracts being let later this year, and we'll look forward to getting some foundational parts of the infrastructure into place."

But the dwindling number of foreign workers here has Contractors concerned. They fear the US Customs and Immigration Service's nearly 100% denial rate for H-2b visas will cripple the local industry. "The availability of labor is a concern also for me as the joint region commander in implementing the projects that we have, and it's something that I'll continue to work closely with the community about," Chatfield promised.

She declined to comment though on whether the defense department is using its weight to actively lobby its colleagues at homeland security to reverse the policy. In the meantime the Admiral says they continue to prepare for the arrival of the projected 5,000 Marines and their families, a number she believes remains firm. She added, "I think it's very important to have the Marines in this theater.

"The move to Guam is very important to our national defense."



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