

Micronesia in Review: Issues and Events,
1 July 2003 to 30 June 2004

Reviews of the Federated States of Micronesia, Kiribati, the Marshall Islands, and Nauru are not included in this issue.

GUAM

The many ongoing issues and problems during the year under review included recovery from natural disaster, preservation of culture, allegations of government corruption, budget cuts, the struggle to lead the economy onto a healthier path, and escalating youth violence. The people of Guam showed their resilience, forging ahead, helping those on and off island, and celebrating the successes of community members.

In December 2003, a year after typhoon Pongsona, millions of dollars of repairs had yet to be done. Hundreds of individuals on island still lacked power and water. There were other infrastructural woes as well, many of which were long-standing. New construction, storm activity, and unchecked vegetation growth contributed to the flooding of roads, bridges, and properties (*PDN*, 17 May 2004). Despite the abundance of water in some locales, other parts of the island, especially in the south, suffered another year of continuous water supply outages.

Guam's cultural crops and wildlife took some hits. As of May 2004, one-fourth of the island's betel nut trees, which produce treasured pugua (betel nut), were affected by a fungal infec-

tion (*PDN*, 24 May 2004). A program of injecting fungicide and burning infected trees is expected to prevent the decimation that the pugua trees suffered on Saipan a few years ago. On the positive side, mealybug-infested papaya trees were declared in August 2003 to be recovering well (*PDN*, 5 Aug 2003). And in the US legislature, work continues on a bill that would create a committee dedicated to controlling the island's pervasive, destructive brown tree snake population.

The fate of the island's free-ranging carabao, which the US Navy regarded as problematic, was especially controversial this year. Islanders questioned the navy's decision to cull the carabao herds and wondered if they should step up efforts to have Chamorros adopt the culturally significant animals instead. Hundreds are said to be on the carabao adoption waiting list. Inserted in the debate is the continuing dialogue concerning the US military's seeming insensitivity toward local concerns.

In other cultural news, August 2003 saw hundreds of community members assisting Guam's Palauan Association to raise money for a new abai (the Guam version of the Palauan term *bai*) meetinghouse. The structure will eventually be a "multicultural center for the Pacific" (*PDN*, 24 Aug 2003). In early 2004, the Micronesian Community Outreach Program held its first meeting. The program is

designed to help migrants from other parts of Micronesia adjust to life on Guam. The program also works to dispel the negative stereotypes of Micronesians held by many on Guam (*PDN*, 27 March 2004). In his regular contributions to the *Pacific Daily News*, self-described second-generation Guam Filipino Norman Analista covered topics ranging from taking local pride in Pinoy culture to the benefits of establishing a Filipino Federal Credit Union. Also speaking to and for Guam's sizable Filipino community, "local Filipino celebrity and icon" Prospero "Popoy" Zamora is once again hosting a show on Guam's public television channel (*PDN*, 27 July 2003).

The need to promote and preserve the Chamorro language was discussed in the media throughout the year. Some worry about the deterioration of the Chamorro language and the consequences thereof. Sagan Fin'nâ' Guen Fino' Chamoru Day Care, which conducts its daily activities solely in Chamorro, was featured in the media (*PDN*, 28 March 2004). The University of Guam (UOG) sponsored its first Fino' Chamoru Na Kompitision (Chamorro Language Competition), with participants from both Guam and Northern Mariana schools. UOG language professors developed and produced an instructional Accelerated Learning method Chamorro text and CD set. Others wrote to the newspaper to suggest increasing the number of Chamorro-language public signs and defended the reinstatement of proper Chamorro place, village, or other names. And for everyday listening, radio station KISH 102.9 began operations in late June 2003; it is "all

Chamorro, all the time" and provides a selection of over 2,000 Chamorro songs (*PDN*, 17 July 2003).

Land issues are also close to Chamorro hearts. Land that was taken or otherwise obtained by the US government some sixty years ago, ostensibly to strengthen the US military's strategic position in the East Asian-Pacific region after World War II, continues to be gradually returned to Guam-Chamorro families. More than 143 parcels of land were returned in 2003, while at least 100 more parcels were said to be slated for future return (*PDN*, 23 Dec 2003).

Amidst these cultural victories, Guam lost several proponents of Chamorro rights, culture, and language during the year. The death of Angel Santos on 6 July 2003 dominated the island newspaper's front pages for many days. Just forty-four years old, Santos was known as "an impassioned and eloquent political and Chamorro rights activist" (*PDN*, 7 July 2003). The same month, the media announced that Donald Topping, respected throughout Guam's community for his research and publications created to help people better understand, preserve, and teach Chamorro, passed away as well (*PDN*, 5 July 2003). Segundo Blas, the Saipan born and raised master carver who was an important force in passing on traditional Chamorro skills, died on 27 April 2004.

On the political front, there was almost constant discussion of elected leaders' efficacy and the general state of the island. Officials passed over eighty laws this year dealing with issues such as reorganizing the island's

judiciary, establishing a firefighter reserve program, and providing funding for construction and repair of schools and health-care facilities (27th Guam Legislature 2003–2004). While many island constituents are appreciative of the support for community causes provided by some leaders, others have expressed disappointment and are dispirited and angry about party politics and inadequate island conditions. Some issues that have featured in political campaigns for years or perhaps decades—from the need to close the island dump, to the dire need of fundamental supplies for public school students, to the need to improve island infrastructure—have yet to be satisfactorily resolved.

As has become the pattern, many public figures decried corruption among island leaders, and approval ratings for elected officials decreased as their terms progressed (*PDN*, 21 Dec 2003). Some constituents charged that island leaders had not kept their campaign promises, had not accomplished anything, and were generally embarrassing. Other people have faulted the political complacency and complicity of community members. Groups such as the Committee to Get Guam Working, made up largely of business leaders, also entered the fray, running costly and ardent campaigns for and against particular issues and individuals.

Further undermining the public's trust, Guam's Office of the Public Auditor reported in mid-2004 that some \$20 million of the Government of Guam's monies may have been wasted or abused. Although Public Auditor Doris Flores Brooks helped raise public awareness of potential

misconduct within government agencies, indictments and prosecutions did not keep pace with her findings. As a result she predicted that the situation regarding the mishandling of government funds is not likely to change anytime soon (*PDN*, 12 May 2004). In response to this sort of concern, the Government of Guam (GovGuam) continued its efforts to privatize the Guam Telephone Authority (said to be the only US phone agency still run by a local government), the Guam Waterworks Authority, management of the Port Authority of Guam, and certain services within the island's Department of Education and the Guam Memorial Hospital (*PDN*, 20 Dec 2003).

During his two years in office, Governor Felix Camacho's strong stances have had mixed receptions. He has pushed for a bond to keep the GovGuam running in the face of a cash shortage (approved by legislators but currently blocked by the island's attorney general), and advocated reorganizing (meant to translate into streamlining) the current forty-eight island government agencies into ten. This year *Pacific Daily News* gave Camacho "kudos" when he called for the resignations of government employees alleged to have misused government credit cards. On the other hand, others have had to publicly ask the governor to appoint members to certain supervisory boards that still lacked sufficient numbers to operate. Camacho has also been scrutinized for appointing or nominating family members to important positions. He nominated his brother-in-law, attorney Robert J Torres, to serve as a justice of the Supreme Court of

Guam, and he appointed a cousin to serve as deputy director of the Guam Department of Youth Affairs.

The people of Guam were especially challenged this year by disputes between public figures. Many felt that such disputes wasted time and demoralized the public. Substantial differences of opinion between Governor Camacho and Lieutenant Governor Kaleo Moylan became widely known in early 2004. They differed on the degree to which the lieutenant governor's office can operate in its own right and independent of the governor's authority. Relations between the two leaders deteriorated to the extent that a contingent of fellow Republicans and Guam's Superior Court were called in to mediate. The Superior Court stated that the governor held authority over all executive branch employees, including those under the lieutenant governor's immediate supervision. Kaleo Moylan then asked the legislature to amend Guam law in order to provide the lieutenant governor greater autonomy. As of June 2004, the dispute had not been fully resolved.

Guam's first elected attorney general, Douglas Moylan, received even more media attention during the year. He was in the spotlight because of a lengthy list of criminal indictments (up 17 percent from the previous year), challenges to governmental authority and particular laws, lawsuits against government agencies and private businesses, and confrontations with people in the community. Moylan, whose logo when running for office in 2002 was a pair of boxing gloves, declared that his office was "at war." He stated that others were working to "disarm"

his efforts aimed at keeping administrators from using the system to benefit themselves rather than the public (*PDN*, 28 May 2004).

There were several high-profile indictments this year. Former Guam Airport Executive Manager Gerald Yingling was indicted for charging thousands of dollars worth of personal expenses to a government credit card. Former Guam Power Authority General Manager Thelma "T" Ann Perez was charged with authorizing private streetlights to be paid for with government funds. Yingling, former Governor Carl Gutierrez, and Gutierrez's former Chief of Staff Gil Shinohara were each accused of participating in the theft of government property during the construction of Gutierrez's personal ranch in Urunao (see *PDN* trial articles archived at <<http://www.guampdn.com/guampublishing/special-sections/ctcg-indictment/index.html>>).

Although the attorney general's office increased the number of criminal cases filed and received the "thumbs up" from many in the community, others feel Moylan is too combative and that the office's conviction rates are low (*PDN*, 28 April 2004). There have also been accusations that Moylan expected preferential treatment and wanted to make special, self-serving deals (*PDN*, 6 Dec 2003). Claims of emotional and physical abuse by both Moylan and his estranged wife against each other were also publicly aired during the year.

There was some relief for Guam's 31,000 students during the year. School facilities improved somewhat, and the Liberation Organizational

Committee 2003 contributed monies for textbooks. Nevertheless, the school system still experienced shortages and difficult conditions. Scarcity of buses caused students to wait for transport, sometimes for hours. Lack of working air conditioners resulted in shortened instructional days. Nine schools operated without nurses on campus. Schools lacked a wide variety of supplies. The Department of Education ended the school year still owing millions of dollars to the Guam Retirement Fund and the Guam Power Authority.

Other education-related challenges included the widespread introduction of Direct Instruction (a scripted reading program that dominates the instructional day); charges that the director of education appointed in fall 2003 treated school administrators and teachers belligerently; and public airing of major differences among the new Board of Education, Department of Education, and the Guam Federation of Teachers. Such conditions may be driving a substantial number of teachers off-island and away from teacher-training programs. Tired of Guam's public school conditions, parents and student and alumni volunteers increased their efforts to repair and maintain the schools and to raise funds. Despite setbacks, many of Guam's students continued to shine. A student from the Academy of Our Lady of Guam was the recipient of a 2004 Presidential Scholars award, and a University of Guam senior was one of eighty students nationwide awarded a Harry S Truman Scholarship (*PDN*, 6 May, 30 March 2004).

Guam's people faced some tough financial situations. Stresses to the

economy included rising power, gasoline, and other costs; loss of GovGuam revenue due to federal and local tax cuts; worry about the island's job market; and budget cuts for many GovGuam agencies. Some factors served to boost the economy and counter these woes. Asia's economy was recovering, and visitor arrivals increased. The number of jobs rose. Business ventures (including two movies filmed on island) infused money into Guam. Millions of typhoon-recovery and state-relief-fund dollars were pumped into the island. GovGuam's cash deficit decreased by \$70 million, down to \$209 million (*PDN*, 4 Feb 2004). GovGuam's six-month-long practice of whittling the workweek to thirty-two hours was lifted. Compact-impact payments (provided by the US federal government to jurisdictions heavily impacted by Micronesian compact agreements with the United States) were increased to a record high of \$14 million annually. Guam Congresswoman Madeleine Z Bordallo negotiated a debt-reconciliation bill through the US Congress that authorizes the president to approve debt relief of \$157 million owed to federal agencies by GovGuam (meant to serve as compensation for years of insufficient federal compact-impact aid to Guam). The much protested 50 percent increase in the gross receipts tax, implemented in 2003, was reversed in 2004 (some hinted that this transpired just in time to please voters before the election). US military presence grew and may continue to do so, pumping dollars into the economy.

Not all activities that bring in

dollars are necessarily desirable. The issue of legalized gambling entered public debate and is slated for a public vote in Guam's November elections (see <<http://www.guamgaming.com/Initiative/gcm.htm>> to view the proposed 2004 gaming initiative). Proponents argue that gambling has the potential to increase the number of jobs by thousands while netting millions of dollars in revenue. Others counter that the industry will only enrich a few and introduce a variety of undesirable effects.

Not only does Guam grapple with internal political relationships, but there is also still a debate about its relationship with the US military. Many struggle to come to terms with the years that the US Navy governed Guam as a colony and stripped land from Guam's people. At the same time, Chamorros have established a reputation for being loyal US citizens who have served and sacrificed for US military causes again and again. This may partly explain why more recent news about US activities in Iraq did not often make headlines, while news concerning the deployment, return, and death of local soldiers received prominent media attention. Guam families, like other US families, wait for their soldiers to return after their deployment, often for eighteen months.

The increased military presence was much discussed. Not only has the number of military personnel increased on Guam, but there has also been an increase in the money allocated to beef up the island's homeland security and to add B-52 bombers, submarines, and other military accouterments. But many also feel that the

increased military presence on the island comes with some heavy price tags.

Much time and energy was spent honoring Chamorros who endured the harsh conditions of World War II, whether during the three-year Japanese occupation or in serving the people of Guam and the US military in other ways. GovGuam agencies and other groups, such as UOG Chamorro language students, sponsored oral history workshops, gathered and presented oral histories in a variety of venues, located significant World War II sites, coordinated special commemorative events, and initiated memorials to wartime experiences.

The creation of a five-member Guam War Claims Review Commission in September 2003 was particularly significant. The commission was given the task of determining whether Guam Chamorros had received reparations for their wartime sufferings equivalent to those received by US citizens. More than 8,300 on-island and off-island Chamorros filled out questionnaires surveying World War II atrocities (*PDN*, 12 May 2004). The commission's June 2004 report to the Bush administration and US Congress found that Guam-Chamorro war reparations had not been on par with those paid to US citizen war victims, and it made several specific recommendations to remedy the situation (*PDN*, 12 May 2004). However, the recommended compensation still appeared inadequate to some for several reasons. It is difficult if not impossible to fully compensate for the loss of family members or for personal pain and suffering. Many also noted the relative lack of official

attention to World War II commemorative events in the Pacific, compared to those in Europe.

Though not much discussed, activist groups were busy this year. A Chamorro Information Activist bimonthly e-zine and forum board appeared, designed to promote alternative “ways and ideas of thinking” about Guam issues, to promote the Chamorro way of life, and to work toward the island’s decolonization (<<http://www.geocities.com/minagahet>>). In June 2004, an Independence Task Force for Guam (e-mail <freeguam@hotmail.com>) sent a letter to the United Nation’s Decolonization Committee and petitioned the UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights “to help us stop the violations against our human rights by the United States of America (US).”

Also distressing has been youth crime, including severe vandalism and burglary. There were at least five different incidents of alarming brutality within a six-month period. One case involved four boys, ranging in age from 6 to 9 years old, accused of beating a 10-year-old neighbor girl to death. Three 16-year-old males were charged as adults for punching, kicking, and breaking a 41-year-old woman’s rib after she had ignored their request for sex. The same three males were also charged with beating a man, whom they believed to be homosexual, with their fists, feet, and a bat. Two months later, four teenage boys aged 16 and 17 were charged as adults for beating up a man, kidnapping and threatening to kill his female companion, and then stealing the couple’s car. Later, two young adult

males, 24 and 29, were connected with a drive-by shooting that injured two military men. According to child psychologist Kirk Bellis, crime committed by island youth has become more intense, and more is likely to come (pers comm, July 2004).

Amidst all of this suffering and tragedy, the community once again demonstrated its charitable nature toward those in need. Efforts included fund-raisers for Jonathan “Jon Jon” Toves, a five-year-old diagnosed with acute lymphocytic leukemia and in need of a bone marrow transplant; money and medicine for Chuuk islanders fighting a flu epidemic; disaster recovery support for typhoon-ravaged South Korea; food, water, and basic necessities to the Federated States of Micronesia after it too endured extensive typhoon damage; and donation drives to help allay the suffering of landslide victims in the Philippines.

The Guam community also cheered on local athletes competing in the 2003 South Pacific Games. Guam competitors earned gold medals in athletics (track and field), baseball, and bodybuilding; silver in athletics, men’s basketball, bodybuilding, women’s soccer, and swimming; and bronze in women’s golf, judo, and swimming (*PDN*, 15 July 2003). Lori Cruz Hayden, winner of two gold medals in bodybuilding at the 2003 games, also earned gold at the 2003 World Women’s Bodybuilding, Fitness, and Body Fitness Championships. This makes her one of the top female bodybuilders in the world.

Guam continued to buzz with activity at the end of the review period. Campaign signs dotted the

landscape in preparation for the November elections. Local media introduced candidates for the island's Liberation Day Queen. And various Guam agencies, organizations, and individuals were revving up to participate in the July 2004 Festival of Pacific Arts in Palau.

KELLY G MARSH

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COMMONWEALTH OF THE NORTHERN MARIANA ISLANDS

The year under review was packed with many significant issues and events. The drama involving Senators José Dela Cruz and Ricardo Atalig played out until the last possible moment (McPhetres 2004, 132–133). Dela Cruz pled guilty and showed ample remorse for his role in the fraudulent hiring of his daughter by colleague Ricardo Atalig; he received a fairly light sentence. But Atalig

continued to provide cover for the Rota/Tinian coalition by not resigning until he was finally taken into custody and sent to federal prison for a little over five years. Atalig demonstrated how he felt about the decision with an infamous hand gesture, a dramatic moment captured on video by the cable news reporter standing outside the courthouse. During the sentence hearing, Judge Munson severely chastised Mr Atalig for his failure to take responsibility for his actions. Meanwhile, Atalig filed a new letter of resignation in the Senate, making the election of his successor in November 2003 the new effective date.

The Senate quorum remained at five regardless of the fact that Senator Atalig had been convicted and sentenced for a felony, but technically remained in office, and Senator Dela Cruz had officially resigned his position. At that time, the Senate had no provisions to automatically dismiss a convicted felon. The Senate was effectively neutralized for the rest of the calendar year, with eight official members, only seven of whom could be physically present. Following incarceration of Mr Atalig the majority changed from five to four for the purposes of passing legislation. During the November election, Rota had to elect two senators instead of one: one to replace Atalig and take office immediately, and one to take office in January when the regular term expired for the other senator from Rota. This left the Rota delegation one member short between November and January. With eight senators, a quorum to hold meetings was five, and the Rota/Tinian coalition dominated. This group, led by Senate