

member countries to “further broaden economic and development ties between Micronesia and the European Union” (FSM Government Web site 2008). The delegation received a pledge of \$1 million for a technical assistance program, and up to \$3 million in low-interest credit for energy development. In addition, the Dutch government pledged a maximum amount of \$2.5 million for various projects to promote sustainable development. As far as EU assistance is concerned, the mission can be pronounced a success, but the odd thing about this mission was the total absence of foreign affairs representatives.

President Mori is asking the FSM Congress to adopt four proposed amendments to the FSM Constitution. If the congress adopts any of these proposed amendments, then they might be submitted to the voters for ratification in the national congressional election in March 2009. The proposed amendments are (1) to lower the threshold of approving a constitutional amendment from 75 to 60 percent of the total votes cast; (2) to make former presidents ineligible to run for congress, and to allow popular election of the FSM president and vice president; (3) to limit all members of congress to a maximum of three consecutive four-year terms; and (4) to limit the term of a justice on the FSM Supreme Court to fifteen years. All of these except the one preventing former presidents from running again have been submitted to voters for approval at one time or another. The president has yet to indicate what he hopes to accomplish with these proposed amendments.

JOHN R HAGLELGAM

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GUAM

Guam’s Annual Liberation Day festivities in July 2007 marked the sixty-third anniversary of relief from occupying forces in World War II. However, a bill meant to compensate residents for the forced labor, torture, injury, and death that occurred during the Japanese occupation of the island made little progress. The Guam World War II Loyalty Recognition Act passed the House but remained stalled in the Senate (*PDN*, 6 March, 8 June 2008).

Meanwhile, debate continued about the massive buildup of US military forces, which involves an influx of equipment and personnel estimated to swell Guam’s population by about 40,000 over the next six years. The Government of Guam (GovGuam) consultant KPMG of Washington DC identified three billion dollars worth of projects necessary for the local government to prepare for the buildup. On the federal side, a draft master plan was released that designated the Fina-gayan area as the preferred site for

the US Marine base, but dropped any reference to a previously promoted one-billion-dollar road. In the background of a rising military presence and resulting strains on infrastructure, the Guam Waterworks Authority objected to a 100 percent increase in the price the US Navy sells water from the Fena Reservoir to the island's local community. Concerns about the traffic and other potential burdens caused some to question the actual benefits versus costs for the Guam community (*PDN*, 25 April 2008). Local leaders raised questions about the buildup and associated funding needs to both US Senate and House committees with jurisdiction over Guam. Concerns about the expanded military presence on Guam also reinvigorated the ongoing debate on island landownership, with calls for the return of federal property to ancestral landowners.

The dominant economic news focused on preparations for military buildup, Tumon luxury condo development, and the rising cost of living. The consumer price index in early 2008 rose by 4.5 percent from the previous year (*PDN*, 8 April 2008). Local economists asserted that wages had not kept pace with inflation even with a July increase in the minimum wage (*PDN*, 1 Jan, 8 Jan 2008). The public especially focused on rising gas prices, and increasing power and water rates (*PDN*, 1 Aug 2007; 22 April 2008). Prices for single-family homes rose 19 percent from the previous year.

Also on the rise was opposition to the construction of luxury condominiums in Tumon Bay. The Guam Land Use Commission had approved projects involving almost 1,500 condo units with more applications pending,

including a development of 608 condo units and 32 villas next to Ypao Beach Park. Although the influx of construction dollars was welcomed, there was increasing public concern about the impact of these projects on the quality of life in the Tumon area (*PDN*, 19 May 2007). The Guam Waterworks authority had already announced a moratorium on water and wastewater connection in parts of Hagåtña and Tamuning, including a section of Tumon Bay, because of increasing strains on existing infrastructure in those neighborhoods.

Business leaders and economists agreed that the economic downturn in the US mainland had little negative impact on Guam, inasmuch as the local economy was more tied to the Japanese and South Korean economies. On the other hand, declines in interest rates benefited local residents for their home and car loans. The federal tax rebate program implemented nationwide to combat the economic downturn was also extended to Guam, thereby benefiting the local economy. As Guam welcomed its twenty-millionth visitor from Japan in September, the decline in the dollar was seen to help tourism, but also impact the price of imported goods (*PDN*, 20 Sept 2007). Construction fueled a rise in employment by 990 jobs from the previous year (*PDN*, 8 March 2008). In general, the island's economy was seen as gradually improving (*PDN*, 24 Jan 2008).

In July 2007, the local government received a \$21.7 million windfall in federal reimbursements, which allowed Governor Felix Camacho to cancel plans for severe budget cuts and worker furloughs (*PDN*, 14 July 2007).

In November 2007, GovGuam issued \$150 million in bonds to refinance existing bond debt and raise funds to pay other obligations. After the refinancing, an additional \$69.3 million was available to pay past-due income tax refunds, court-ordered payments to retirees, upgrades for mental health services that were mandated in another court case, and other health, social service, and education improvements. Also funded was an overdue valuation study of the island's real property, which under the Organic Act is used to establish the ceiling on overall government debt (*PDN*, 25 Oct 2007).

Even with the cash infusion, government finances continued to be a concern. The Camacho administration's advocacy of a package of fee and tax increases met with strong opposition from both activist and business leaders (*PDN*, 4 July 2007). After several late night sessions, the legislature passed a compromise budget in September, which the Camacho administration stated was not balanced (*PDN*, 4 Oct 2007). In May 2008, past-due payments for streetlights led to the Guam Power Authority removing forty-eight streetlights, which concerned affected communities (*PDN*, 13 May 2008). Adding to the government's financial burden in April was a \$72 million settlement of court cases against the government for Earned Income Tax Credit payments due low-income workers (*PDN*, 11 April 2008).

Concerns for cost savings and effectiveness prompted a focus on government organization. A bill to consolidate housing agencies was rejected by the legislature in August 2007 largely

because it provided no cost savings (*PDN*, 25 Aug 2007). The Chamber of Commerce pushed a ballot initiative that would reduce the legislature from fifteen senators to only seven. Critics of the proposal said it would reduce diversity in representation and concentrate too much power in a few hands (*PDN*, 6 April 2008).

Meanwhile, Governor Camacho brought forth his own proposal in April 2008 to give him broad authority over the public school system, because of its continued management and financial difficulties. The Guam Public School System continued to experience turmoil as the attorney general's office closed several public schools owing to needed repairs, and the school system lost two superintendents in a row (*PDN*, 21 June 2008). Schools Superintendent Luis Reyes was fired in March, and his replacement, Giovanni Sgambelluri, resigned in June after only two weeks on the job (*PDN*, 29 March, 6 June 2008). At the tertiary level, the island community once again has a Chamorro at the helm of the University of Guam, former Congressional Delegate Robert A Underwood (*PDN*, 22 May 2008).

In the arena of health care, public attention continued to be drawn to the island's only civilian hospital, Guam Memorial Hospital. As in previous years, concerns were voiced about the hospital's financial situation, shortage of hospital beds, lack of accreditation, and management. Consequently, there was active public discussion with a focus on familiar solutions, including expanding the current hospital, partial privatization, and building a new private hospital. On a positive note, Guam saw advances in the use

of telemedicine to provide patients with diagnostic services through video feeds with off-island specialists (*PDN*, 8 March 2008). A private air ambulance service also commenced service during the period under review to medevac patients for off-island care.

The year saw the continuation of a number of efforts promoting indigenous culture, including a publicized traditional Chamorro chant ceremony at the site of ancestral remains on the grounds of the Guam Hotel Okura; the unveiling of the Healing Farms program, which advances traditional Chamorro agricultural practices for young people; the Alâhas Project, which created alâhas (a type of traditional Chamorro jewelry) replicas to raise funds for the Guam Museum; and Project Proa, an effort to build a traditional seafaring vessel (*proa*), to invigorate the tourist industry with island traditions (*PDN*, 9 July 2007; 24 May 2008). Further, Governor Camacho issued a proclamation marking 2008 as Silibrasion Proa to recognize efforts by Chamorros in Guam, the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, and San Diego to reconstruct an ancient seafaring vessel, expected to be completed before the end of 2008 (*PDN*, 7 Jan 2008).

Chamorro women achieving milestones this year included Tanya Muna, who became the first Chamorro female deputy US marshall for Guam and the Northern Mariana Islands, and Rindrate Celes Limtiaco, who was named the first Chamorro publisher in the Gannett newspaper chain (*PDN*, 10 Aug, 31 Aug 2007). The island kept abreast of Guam's own Roseana "Rose" Laguana, who competed on Fox's reality television show, *The Next*

Great American Band (*PDN*, 6 Nov 2007).

Community activity extended to the Internet with the 10 April 2008 launch of Guampedia (www.guampedia.com). People worldwide now have access to a scholarly encyclopedic online resource describing Guam culture and history. The online video service YouTube featured an increasing number of submissions about Guam, ranging from local political activist commentary to much publicized footage of a B-2 stealth bomber crash on Guam in February. Guam teen Tiffany Shieh developed a Web site (www.guamendangeredbirds.com) to "raise awareness about the island's endangered birds" (*PDN*, 26 Aug 2007). And people from Guam were able to Web-conference with loved ones serving in the military overseas as part of the Freedom Calls Foundation effort (*PDN*, 6 April 2008).

As has become common, the many cultures of Guam's community celebrated their presence throughout the year. The twentieth annual Guam Micronesian Island Fair in October 2007 was touted as a means to promote Micronesian unity and the sharing of heritage among the region's peoples (*PDN*, 8 Oct 2007). The Guam Humanities Council held several events for their project, "A Journey Home: Camp Roxas and Filipino American History in Guam." Additionally, some new cultural events were added into the mix, such as the Hålom Tâno' Pâsgua (Christmas Jungle Land) cultural holiday fair and the Ferian Huegu yan Hugeten Chamoru (Chamorro Toys and Games Festival).

There were periodic reminders of

federal ties to the island, including a visit by a high-level congressional delegation. The delegation toured local military facilities and the War in the Pacific Park, where they honored military servicemen and Chamorro civilians who died during World War II. In December, the National Park Service announced that an ornament designed by a local artist was included in the decorations for the official White House Christmas tree. Guam was also part of the US Treasury program that featured each state and territory on the back of editions of the US quarter coins (*PDN*, 6 March 2008). However, media reports of a possible official apology to African Americans for slavery prompted some to note that others, including colonized indigenous people, were also in line for an apology (*PDN*, 8 Sept 2007).

Guam issues received attention from off-island legislators in two forums. The Twenty-Seventh General Assembly of the Association of Pacific Island Legislators was held on Guam and focused on the impact of the military buildup on Guam and neighboring islands. At a Honolulu meeting of legislators from Alaska, Hawai'i, and the offshore territories, concerns were raised that US citizens living outside the contiguous forty-eight states were being treated as "second-class citizens" or "like they're from a foreign country" (*PDN*, 15 Dec 2007). Chamorro and human rights activist, author, and third-year law student Julian Aguon appeared before the UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues calling for an investigation into the plight of the indigenous peoples of the remaining non-self-governing territories, including Guam. In June 2008,

Dr Lisa Linda Natividad, a clinical therapist, social worker, and professor at the University of Guam, along with Aguon, embarked on a month-long speaking tour of major Australian cities to discuss what they termed the "hyper-militarization of Guam" by the United States.

In 2003, a federal court issued a consent decree requiring GovGuam to close the existing Ordot landfill and open a new one by 2006. The court order was prompted when the US Environmental Protection Agency filed a suit against GovGuam for the continued operation of the landfill, which the agency claimed was not in compliance with federal environmental standards. The resulting court order stipulated that GovGuam was to meet several deadlines to close Ordot landfill and open a new one that would be in compliance. After failing to meet that deadline and others, US District Court Chief Judge Frances Tydingco-Gatewood this year placed GovGuam's solid waste operation under federal receivership and appointed a private firm as receiver. The receiver was given the power over existing solid waste operations including the landfill, as well as the power to sign contracts and secure fees to fund the implementation of the consent decree.

Longtime Senator and former Speaker Antonio "Tony" Unpingco, a quiet but strong supporter of Chamorro culture, passed away October 2007 (*PDN*, 20 Oct 2007). With Unpingco's death, three major contenders vied to replace him in a special election held on 5 January 2008. The winner, former Democratic Senator and Chief Justice Benjamin

J “B J” Cruz, switched the legislative leadership from Republican by establishing an eight–seven Democratic majority. After several weeks of political and parliamentary maneuverings, the Republicans surrendered the top three spots of Speaker, vice speaker, and legislative secretary. The spots were filled by Democrats Judy Won Pat, David Shimizu, and Tina Muña Barnes. The Republicans, however, were able to retain control of the chairs of the legislature standing committees.

Appearing on the special election ballot was a controversial initiative seeking to legalize slot machines at Guam Greyhound Park. The failure of the proposal, riding on the heels of a similar failed November 2006 proposition, caused island leaders to examine ways to prevent voters from having to repeatedly act on the same issue. Also in January 2008, Robert Torres Jr was sworn in as the new chief justice of the Supreme Court of Guam (*PDN*, 16 Jan 2008).

International interest was drawn to Guam during the caucus to choose between Democratic contenders Barack Obama and Hillary Clinton. Though Guam does not participate in the general election for president, both political parties accept Guam delegates to their national conventions. In May 2008, more than 5,000 voters participated in the presidential caucus, which Obama won by a mere seven votes (*PDN*, 5 May 2008).

Although there was increased media interest in Guam, some of the coverage tended to reinforce stereotypes about Pacific Island life. For example, CNN coverage used footage of grass huts and “natives” waving through palm

trees when reporting on the Guam vote. Also, the heightened significance of the Guam results was often characterized in negative and patronizing tones. On Guam itself, the presidential campaign produced its own dynamics. Since the village of Inarajan’s annual celebration of its patron saint was scheduled for the same weekend (10–11 May) as Guam’s Democratic Presidential Caucus, they were permitted to hold their vote a week earlier than the rest of the island, on the weekend of 3–4 May.

Earlier in the year, Guam’s Republican Party picked its own delegation for their convention. However, it did not receive much attention since, by that point, John McCain had wrapped up the nomination. In a videotaped message for a fundraiser, McCain noted that “three generations of his family have been to Guam” and that “one of Guam’s daughters,” Donna Jones, was serving as his national coalition coordinator for Americans with disabilities and disabled veterans (*PDN*, 17 May 2008).

In crime news, arrests were made in cases involving the theft of commemorative plaques in the War in the Pacific Park, threats of violence against the wife of Lieutenant Governor Mike Cruz, and the theft of produce from a taro patch, among other incidents. Former airport general manager Gerald Yingling was sentenced to four months house arrest, community service, and a \$5,000 fine for misuse of government credit cards. In another case involving government credit cards, Governor Camacho commuted the sentence of the former deputy for Guam Mass Transit, Tony Diaz, just hours before Diaz was to begin his

prison sentence. In a third case involving credit cards, the attorney general's office moved to dismiss "with prejudice" criminal charges against former Guam Economic Development and Commerce Authority General Manager Ed Untalan, explaining that they had found no criminal intent involved.

One of Governor Camacho's top advisers, Tony Sanchez, quit his post on Camacho's staff. Months earlier, during his previous tenure as superior court administrator, Sanchez had been indicted in a money-laundering case relating to payments to notorious Washington lobbyist Jack Abramoff.

KELLY G MARSH

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MARSHALL ISLANDS

The past twelve months in the Republic of the Marshall Islands have been dominated by responses to a variety of crises concerning the national election, continued recognition of the Republic of China (Taiwan), the status of Kwajalein Atoll, the looming energy shortage, and the recently declared state of national economic emergency.

The dominant political event was the national election held on 19 November 2007. For all intents and purposes, however, the election came

nine days earlier, when then-Speaker of the Nitijela (Parliament) Litokwa Tomeing left the United Democratic Party (UDP) and announced his support for, among other initiatives, the Aelon Kein Ad (AKA) party platform to recognize the People's Republic of China. Tomeing, who became Speaker and was prominent in the UDP leadership when it came to power in 2000, was quoted as saying, "Our government needs to change. Our current leaders have lost their steam and they shouldn't be allowed to continue" (MIJ, 2007c).

There was little smooth sailing for the Note administration in the run-up to the election. At the end of July 2007, Minister of Foreign Affairs Gerald Zackios resigned his cabinet position shortly after testifying at a US House of Representatives subcommittee hearing on the Compact of Free Association, although he retained his Senate seat from Arno Atoll. While rumors and speculation abounded as to the reasons behind the resignation, the president's office added to the confusion by letting more than a week pass between acknowledging receipt of the resignation and finally accepting it. In addition, the Note government was perceived as having a "hands-off" approach to problems with the fleet at Air Marshall Islands, the government-owned airline and lifeline for many outer-island residents; rolling blackouts in Ebeye; and an unflattering economic report from the US Department of Interior released in late 2007 (Office of Insular Affairs 2007). Speaker Tomeing's analysis that the Note administration was "a dismal failure" seemed to herald the end of UDP rule (Yokwe Online 2007a).