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Japan commits \$6 billion Funding approved for Marine relocation to Guam

By David V. Crisostomo
Pacific Daily News
dcrisostomo@guampdn.com

Japan yesterday committed in law to funding the Marine relocation to Guam.

It is a \$6 billion commitment from Japan -- the bigger chunk of the \$10 billion relocation-to-Guam price tag -- that paves the way for the largest military buildup on island since World War II. At least \$1 billion a year could flow into the island over the next decade.

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Okinawa to Guam.

The law that was passed by Japan's upper house of parliament yesterday, after being approved in the lower house last month:

- Funds the realignment of U.S. forces in Japan; and
- Enables the state-run Japan Bank for International Cooperation to provide investment and loans for the planned transfer of 8,000 U.S. Marines and thousands of their dependents from

Zoom Photo



The Associated Press

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Japan has agreed to pay \$6 billion for the transfer of troops to Guam, while Washington has said it will contribute \$4 billion.

The U.S. military also plans to spend an additional \$5 billion on Guam during the next decade to support an increased presence on island.

The move is just a small part of the largest restructuring and shifting of U.S. forces in decades in an effort to better respond to threats and hotspots in Asia.

"The realignment of the U.S. troops in Japan will contribute to maintaining peace and security in Japan. The realignment is also extremely important to reducing the burden on residents near defense facilities," the legislation said.

The \$6 billion for Guam is part of the \$24.7 billion that Japan is expected to spend on the realignment.

'National security'

The new law's primary goal is to award subsidies to Japanese municipalities that cooperate with the plan to realign United States troops based in the country.

"This is aimed not at moving things through the power of money, but rather at fulfilling the government's duty by giving subsidies to people who have decided to serve the interests of national security," Prime Minister Shinzo Abe said before the vote on the legislation.

The subsidies for Japanese municipalities would increase in each of the four phases:

- Acceptance of the realignment plan;
- Implementation of an environmental impact assessment;
- Start of facility construction; and
- Completion of construction along with start of facility use.

The law has a time line of 10 years through the end of March 2017, but a special clause would allow for extending its validity for up to five more years if implementation of the realignment is prolonged.

'Major step forward'

"The approval by the Japan Diet of more than \$6 billion in funding is a major step

Commitment: Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe, right, is pictured during a special committee hearing of the Lower House last week. Japan's parliament yesterday passed into law a \$6 billion funding commitment to the Marine relocation from Okinawa to Guam.

TO THE POINT

- Japan's parliament has passed into law the funding commitment to the Marine relocation from Okinawa to Guam.

JAPAN LAW

- A bill passed into law yesterday by the upper house of Parliament, after being approved by the lower house last month, allows municipal Japanese governments hosting consolidated U.S. military facilities to receive state subsidies to expand their infrastructure to accommodate the increased troop burden.
- It will also allow the state-run Japan Bank for International Cooperation to give loans to contractors hired to help relocate 8,000 Marines from Okinawa to Guam. The bank will give loans and investments to a U.S. company that will build new housing for the Marines in Guam, according to the Defense Ministry. The company will pay back the money with rent it receives.

AT A GLANCE

- About 8,000 3rd Marine Expeditionary Force personnel and their 9,000 dependents will relocate from Okinawa to Guam by 2014.
- Of the estimated \$10.27 billion cost of the facilities and infrastructure development costs for the relocation to Guam, Japan will provide \$6.09 billion, including \$2.8 billion in direct cash contributions, to develop facilities and infrastructure on Guam to enable the relocation, which is a clamor by Okinawans.
- The United States will fund the remainder of the facilities and infrastructure development costs for the relocation to Guam--estimated at \$3.18 billion in fiscal spending plus approximately \$1 billion for a road.
- The U.S. military also plans to spend an additional \$5 billion on Guam during the next decade to support an increased presence on island.

toward the relocation of Marines to Guam," said Gov. Felix Camacho.

"While there is still much work to be done in preparing our island for the increase in military presence," the governor said, "the large-scale development that the U.S. and Japan governments are funding will further strengthen confidence in Guam's economy as we prepare for what promises to be the strongest economic growth our island has ever seen."

Guam Delegate Madeleine Bordallo yesterday said, "The Japanese Diet took a significant step forward for the military buildup on Guam. The announcement reaffirms the commitment of the Japanese and United States governments to this force realignment.

"It also shows a commitment to the strategic importance of the bilateral agreement," Bordallo said.

"The time line approved by the Diet is consistent with the bilateral agreement signed last June and is cause for policymakers and community leaders on Guam to continue planning for the Marine relocation to Guam."

While the overall realignment of troops is aimed at improving regional security, Lt. Gen. Joseph Weber, who as commander of the 3rd Marine Expeditionary Force is the top Marine on Okinawa, has said the Marine relocation is largely being done to "reduce the burden" to the southern Japanese island.

Is Guam ready?

Whether Guam is ready and is positioned to maximize the economic benefits of the buildup locally has been a hotly debated issue.

A Defense Department representative recently identified the local government-run seaport as a potential chokepoint in the upcoming military buildup.

The military buildup is expected to double the volume of cargo entering through the island's only civilian seaport, which is being run by the Port Authority of Guam.

At issue is whether the port, which has been in dire need of improvements and modernization for years, will be ready with enough capacity to handle the significantly larger volume of cargo.

The private sector has criticized the Camacho administration for not moving fast enough to make the enormous changes that would bring the port up to speed with the anticipated surge in incoming cargo traffic.

The governor yesterday said, "My administration is committed to ensuring that the opportunities that come from this buildup benefit our people directly."

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'Very concerned'

Vice Speaker Eddie Calvo yesterday said he is "very concerned" about the port issue.

"There is going to be a dynamic economic change on the island," said Calvo, who is the chairman of the legislative finance committee.

"With billions of dollars, it doesn't take much money to purchase a crane from the military side," said Calvo, adding that Guam stands to lose millions if it is unable to handle the increased cargo.

When asked if the local government can catch up in time to benefit from the buildup, Calvo responded: "I don't know whether we could, but we have to."

The Guam Chamber of Commerce point man on the military buildup yesterday stressed an urgent need for the island to prepare.

"The sheer magnitude of projects being contemplated is on a scale and magnitude far bigger than most of us in Guam are able to comprehend," said Gerry Perez, chairman of the Chamber's Armed Forces Committee.

"Spending over \$1 billion in construction activity to meet tight deadlines by March 2017 is a task that would require much outside assistance in funding, managing and actually doing the work," he said.

Perez said it took the island more than a decade to plan and spend \$75 million in infrastructure upgrades after Typhoon Karen in 1962.

"Even if we have 10 times today the capacity we did then, it will take us more than 133 years to spend \$10 billion," Perez said. "Keep in mind that \$15 billion is the planning reference being discussed."

Reality check

"We are fooling ourselves if we believe that we can get the job done within the current government operating environment," Perez said.

"There must be a 'breakthrough' in our local thinking if we are to be ready for 'prime time,' The 'breakthrough' of which I speak is a new paradigm for Guam's community mindset, political direction and institutional operating models," Perez said.

"The buildup is coming," he added, "and it is up to us to harness the benefits that can improve the quality of life for every man, woman and child on the island."

STORYCHAT 

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Comments by: **Basta_Gachong**

Posted: Thu May 24,
2007 4:55 pm

we DO NOT need these american marine dating our island women, only bad can happen with that. just say no to the usa marines 😡

Comments by: **Retired**

Posted: Thu May 24,
2007 4:43 pm

In case I was vague, my point is that I see no increases in tourism to visit a Marine Corps base.

Comments by: **HeavySteel**

Posted: Thu May 24,
2007 4:34 pm

Has any one really pondered the question why is Japan willing to spend 6 Billion on relocating the Marines? Japan is more than happy to be rid of the Marines with all the troubles they have encountered and endured. Guam is beautiful the way it is. I can only say with this build up it will be paradise lost forever. I could imagine how Tumon will be when they arrive. Is it really a good thing or should we dread their arrival

Comments by: **Uncle Sam**

Posted: Thu May 24,
2007 4:15 pm

Retired, I don't know the true reason BUT....

There are scores of local Okinawans ladies dating Marines, you see them everywhere you go on the island of Okinawa.

As I have said before, the wife and I go up there about once a year (I use my retiree benefit and fly through the Air Force).

Comments by: **yukky**

Posted: Thu May 24,
2007 4:00 pm

there goes 671 again. running off at his unknowledgable pie hole. less than 1/2 of 1% of crimes in Okinawa and the rest of Japan are committed by American forces. the rest is like Guam. locals commit the crimes. the ones done by the Military are sensationalized because it is the thing to do. the last story I read from the Japan news agencies said the 6Billion would be in the form of loans to companies doing construction for the bases on Guam. govguam hopefully will not get their hands on it to throw away for the GG retirees.


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