

Senator Judith Paulette Guthertz, DPA
Assistant Majority Leader



I Mina'Trenta na Liheslaturan Guåhan
Thirtieth Guam Legislature

CHAIRPERSON, COMMITTEE ON THE GUAM MILITARY BUILDUP AND HOMELAND SECURITY

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November 15, 2010

Ms. Winona H. Varnon
Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary
U.S. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan
400 Maryland Avenue, S.W.
Washington, D.C. 20202-4500

Dear Ms. Varnon:

I have received your recent letter concerning the U.S. Department of Education's plan to take back 80 acres of land in the Marbo, Guam area, which has long been intended as the site for island educational facilities.

As you spell out in cold and bloodless prose, yes, the Government of Guam is in technical default of the agreement and has been for a number of years, due to lack of funding to proceed with school construction, which can hardly be unusual in many of the areas under your jurisdiction.

What I do not see is any rationale for the need to carry out this repossession at this time. It seems arbitrary and cruel and neglects current developments here.

As I am sure you are aware, we are in the opening stages of an unprecedented U.S. military buildup in Guam, involving upwards of \$15 billion. The dramatic growth of population both of the island and its schools within the next few years is well established and certainly known to USDOE. We would have thought USDOE's thoughts would be on the educational needs of these many new students rather than reclaiming a piece of undeveloped property.

Since the land in question is in the area of an extremely controversial proposed firing range complex site, local suspicion was immediate that future Guam public schools on this land would give away to military target ranges.

Assistant Secretary of the Navy Jackalyne Pfannenstiel told us however that this was not the case and that as far as the Navy is concerned, if the land is used at all, it would be for 'non-firing' training activities in the Andersen [Air Force Base] South area.

Secretary Pfannenstiel said the US Department of Education would have to explain why it wants the land back and that's what we're asking you to tell us. What will USDOE use this land for?



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With the military buildup, our civilian educational need—as best we can determine at a minimum at present—is for six new public schools; i.e., one high school, two middle schools, and four elementary schools. This parcel of 80 acres is most suitable for some of those schools. Right now it is planned as the site for a middle school and high school.

The people of Guam are making many sacrifices to accommodate the military buildup in a very small island and are quite reasonably wondering how there can be talk about taking this land back for unspecified purposes at this critical time.

I think it's without question that Government of Guam revenue will increase, in large part due to the buildup, allowing for construction of new schools in the near future, assuming that you don't take away the property on which to do so.

I implore you and your colleagues to reconsider your decision and exhibit some consideration and respect for the needs of the people of Guam. To reclaim this land at a time when we are so economically vulnerable as a community is disheartening.

Senseramente,

Judith P. Guthertz, DPA
Senator