



DOLE MARKETING MISSION TO GUAM AND PALAU

On 12-14 September 2006, the DOLE Mission team led by POEA Administrator Rosalinda D. Baldoz met with the Guam Department of Labor Officials (GDOL), Senator Jesse Lujan, Chairman of the Committee on Labor of the Guam Legislature, Guam Contractors Association and Guam Chamber of Commerce to discuss potential employment opportunities for Filipino workers due to the anticipated transfer next year of 8,000 U.S. Marines and their families from Okinawa to Guam.

Guam officials informed the mission team that an estimated 15,000 to 20,000 foreign workers will be needed with the transfer of 8,000 US marines and around 10,000 dependents from Okinawa to Guam. While the proposed master plan for the transfer has not yet been officially released, indications are that as much as US\$10.2B, to be shared by the United States (40%) and Japan (60%) will be spent for military construction. It is expected that the planning, design and bidding on the construction projects will take up to two years to complete and actual construction is anticipated to begin in late 2007 or early 2008, with the construction boom expected to last 2014.

With the increase in military personnel and their families over the next several years, the population boom is predicted to increase by as much as 35,000 or almost 25% of Guam's present population, The local government of Guam will also be taking on infrastructure projects, construction and renovation of new and existing facilities and other improvement to accommodate the increase in population, Some 3,600 housing units are being lined up for immediate construction.

To facilitate the hiring of alien workers, Guam labor officials and the private contractors will support lobby efforts for a change in two major federal policies, the lifting of the prohibition on the use of the non-immigrant aliens in a military construction project or base operations support in Guam pursuant to Defense Department Supplement to Federal Acquisition Regulation (DFAR) and the exclusion of

the Guam H2B visas that will be granted to foreign workers from the current 60,000 quota for non-immigrant across the United States.

Preference for Filipino workers for construction work was indicated as their work performance has been found to be greatly reliable and valuable based on past experience .

The mission team recommended that the POLO-Saipan and the POEA develop Guam specific guidelines on the recruitment and hiring of Filipino workers based on the Philippines and GDOL laws and regulations and the requirements of the private employers. Moreover, the team also proposed to DOLE to consider the re-opening of the Philippine Labor Office in Agana and the deployment of a Labor Attache next year, upon official notice that the labor market is already opened to foreign workers.

The Mission team proceeded to Palau on 15-16 September 2006 and met with Vice-President Elias Camsek Chin, Minister of State Temmy Shmull, the Palau Bureau of Human Resources and Palau Chamber of Commerce. The Mission was informed that three big hotels are under construction and will be opened soon. The Palau businessmen have expressed their desire to hire workers through licensed Philippines agencies. The Mission team recommended that the DOLE/POEA pursue negotiations with the Palau government to work out a system of minimizing undocumented workers by issuing work permits only to Filipinos documented by the POEA.