



TRANSFER OF US MARINE FORCES IN GUAM TO CREATE EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES FOR OFWs IN FIVE (5) YEARS

The Philippine Overseas Labor Office in Saipan has provided updates on potential employment opportunities for Filipino workers relative to the impending transfer of US Marine forces and their families from Okinawa, Japan to Guam. While the marine relocation will start in 2012, associated work needs to be done in the near term to increase Guam's port capacity, upgrade its outdated infrastructure and expand its capacity to accommodate the influx of workers and construction products. This could mean possible job opportunities for Filipino engineering and construction workers in near future.

During the Guam Industry Forum II organized by the Joint Guam Program Office and Naval Facilities Command on 6-8 March 2008 in Guam, issues related to the design, construction and logistic requirements on the military build up were discussed and provided stakeholders, potential investors and industry players with updates on the preparations for the relocation of U.S. Marines from Okinawa to Guam. It also served as a venue for discussion of issues related to the design, construction and logistics requirements on the military build up.

The following relevant labor market information were gathered during the Forum:

- Build up-related construction will begin immediately after the signing by Navy Assistant Secretary BJ Penn of the Record of Decision (ROD) in January 2010. The draft Military Master Plan (MP) is hoped to be completed by the end of March 2008 and the working MP by the end of this year. It will be finalized after the signing of the ROD.

- Qualified workforce availability remains a challenge to the build-up as 75% of the 12,000 to 15,000 of the needed skilled workers would be outsourced.
- Guam Labor Director Maria Connelley cited that regional collaborative efforts are being undertaken to address the lack of skilled workers. The Regional Workforce Development Council (*initially composed of representatives from Guam, Palau, CNMI and Palau*) will meet in April 2008 in Palau to develop a Regional Workforce Strategic Development Plan.
- Veterans will be included in the priority list, before sourcing of foreign workers can be done, in addition to previously identified priority manpower resources to be tapped for the build-up (*US citizens both on Guam and from the mainland, those from US territories, those from the Freely Associated States*).
- The US military and the Government of Guam are awaiting relief from the Federal visa cap through Senate Bill No. 2843 which includes a provision that exempts both Guam and the CNMI from the national caps for the number of H2 temporary worker visas that could be issued for work in either location. After being derailed, the bill was reintroduced to the US Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources as SB NO. 2739, otherwise known as Consolidated Natural Resources Act of 2008.

Source: POLO-Saipan
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