

Officials ask for extension on EIS review

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Guam's officials are asking U.S. military leaders to extend the period for review of the draft environmental impact statement, which will detail the environmental consequences of the military buildup, as well as possible options to avoid or limit those risks.

Guam Delegate Madeleine Z. Bordallo on Tuesday announced that she had sent a letter to U.S. Navy Secretary Ray Mabus on Oct. 20, requesting an extension of the comment period for the draft EIS, according to a press release issued from her office.

An EIS details the possible environmental repercussions of a federal action, and it's required by the 1969 National Environmental Policy Act. Once a draft EIS is released, the public has 45 days to review it before a final EIS is published as a Record of Decision in the Federal Register.

In Guam's case, the draft EIS will address environmental issues raised

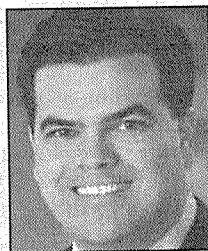


as a result of the shift of 8,000 Marines and their 9,000 dependents to the island. The document also will address the development of Apra Harbor to support a temporary nuclear-powered aircraft carrier group, and the development of an Army Air and Missile Defense Task Force with 600 military personnel and their depend-

ents. The projected date for the draft's release is Nov. 20, members of Gov. Felix Camacho's Advisory Consulting Team said Tuesday.

Bordallo was scheduled to meet with Mabus yesterday to discuss an extension for review and other matters in greater detail, the press release stated.

"I have asked that the U.S. Navy re-evaluate its decision to only allow 45 days for analysis of the draft EIS," Bordallo said. "I believe that additional comment period will be helpful to ensuring greater public participation and a more legally



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Sen. Rory Respicio

sound final Record of Decision. If less comprehensive studies such as the Mariana Islands Range Complex were allowed longer comment periods, then the comment period for the draft EIS relating to the military buildup on Guam should be extended to be equal if not greater than studies of lesser scope."

Celeste Werner, the Advisory Consulting Team's program manager, said the team would provide a summary of the points made in the 8,000-plus-page draft to make it easier for the public to review.

However, Sen. Judith Guthertz, who is on the Committee on Guam Military Buildup and Homeland Security, said she didn't feel confident in the team's review to address Guam residents' concerns. She said her main concerns for the EIS are the accuracy of the information included, the fairness of the options for ac-

tion, and the identification of gaps that the EIS does not address.

"Imagine a 7,000-to-9,000-page chemistry textbook filled with citations, charts, tables and illustrations, and then try to imagine the summary for that book," Sen. Rory Respicio added. "You would have to repeatedly return to the text to fully understand the summary, and I assume that those who read the summary of the EIS would need to do the same sort of things."

Guthertz and Respicio, in a letter sent Friday to Maj Gen. David Bice, executive director of the Joint Guam Program Office, which oversees the buildup, also requested an extension for the draft EIS public review period.

They said it was only fair that Guam be granted an extension to review the draft EIS, especially after U.S. officials have indicated that

Washington may give the new Japanese leadership more time to review the U.S.-Japan agreement on the realignment of forces, which includes the Guam buildup.

"Japan has announced that their decision may not be forthcoming until next summer," the letter reads, referring to the reluctance of the new Japanese leadership to accept the terms of the 2006 U.S.-Japan agreement as they are. "Guam is part of America, not foreign soil, and the principle and the courtesy being extended to the people of Japan should extend equally to the people of Guam, ... as much as we want to get it right in Japan, we absolutely must get it right in Guam."

Camacho, too, sent a letter to Bice on Tuesday, requesting an extension of 75 days — likely, according to Guthertz, who has discussed the possibility with Deputy Undersecretary of Defense for Installations and Environment Dorothy Robyn.

"I think that whether or not we get an extension depends almost entirely on what the military really thinks of the people of Guam," Respicio added. "By not authorizing an extension, the military would be thumbing their noses at the people of Guam."