

Editorial

Ships Welcome News.....

Guam's economy, on the upswing for the past six years, except for an energy crisis let-down, received a welcome boost Saturday, with the not unexpected announcement of the planned transfer of a guided missile frigate, two guided missile destroyers and three escort ships to Apra Harbor.

The move involves about 1,815 military personnel and 1,560 dependents —which is a very large number of people, when you think that they will be permanently stationed on Guam, and considering the small total population on the island. It is a bigger move, by far, than when the Proteus first came to Guam nine or ten years ago.

Now we know the reason behind the Navy plans to build some 500 military housing units on Guam, and the rush-rush behind the project.

But besides the estimated 3,375 people that the Destroyer Squadron Nine will bring to Guam directly, it was also reported that the Navy expects to augment shore activities in Guam with another 120 military personnel and their dependents.

While Adm. Maurice F. Weisner, commander in chief of the Pacific Fleet said that there was no specific figures on whether the move would create any new jobs for local residents, but he did say that the transfer of the ships here from San Diego is expected to "have a favorable impact on the area." Indeed it should. Just making rough guesses, from the number of military people now stationed on Guam, and the number of civilian employees needed for service, maintenance, office work, transportation, communication, etc. it could well be that the transfer could create a thousand or more civilian jobs in the next several years.

Real Adm. G. Steve Morrison, COMNAVMAR, said that the transfer of the ships "serves to reiterate the fact that the Navy is here to stay on an island that is considered a strategically important location in the Pacific. I believe," he said, "that the movement of the six ships to Guam will be mutually beneficial—the Navy will receive a fine port for the squadron and the Territory's economy will receive a substantial boost."

Perhaps, to those of us watching military activity in the Pacific over the years, the good Admiral's words may be somewhat superfluous. We are all aware that the Navy is on Guam to stay, and we know that Guam is considered an important location in the Pacific, particularly after the reversion of Okinawa, and the events of recent years in Vietnam, Thailand, Taiwan, Singapore, the Philippines and Japan.

This reinforces our belief that Guam is assuming the role as the major U.S. defense bastion of the Western Pacific, moving to surpass the P.I., Okinawa, and Japan proper for that designation. The destroyer squadron, the nuclear submarines, with the sub tender, the Navy Supply Depot, the Naval Magazine, the Ship Repair Facility, the Navy Air Station, the Naval Communications Station, and the Naval Hospital—coupled with the major SAC facilities out at Andersen AFB, points up the fact that Guam—along with Tinian to the north, will eventually assume the U.S. first line of defense in the Pacific. This shows that the policy of pull-back to U.S. soil is continuing slowly but surely.

There has been some criticism over the years about the Japanese tourist, who, they say, come to Guam after paying their money to a Japanese tour agency. They fly here on a Japan Air Lines plane, and are picked up at the airport by Japanese tour buses, and go directly to a Japanese built, owned, and managed hotel, and eat in Japanese restaurants. The facts are that, despite appearances, between hotel taxes, gross receipt taxes, jobs provided, income taxes, services provided, that the average Japanese tourist leaves a good deal of money on Guam, without much of an effort on the part of the people of the island.

The same argument has been used in the past to discount military personnel stationed here. The sailor, the argument goes, lives in Navy housing, he's flown here by the Navy, he and his wife shop in military exchanges and commissaries, attend military theaters and nightclubs, and their medical needs are provided by the military. All this, obviously, is not entirely true. In the first place the income tax money alone could amount to as much as \$1,000,000 for GovGuam. Then, it can be surprising to see how much money our military friends do spend downtown in the civilian community—and they will do more as the business competition becomes stronger.

All of this is part of a new Navy program, the overseas homeporting concept, being done in Japan (with a carrier), Greece, and now Guam. The movement of the ships to Guam will make it possible for Navy personnel to spend more time with their families, a move that is expected to increase retention rates.

The announcement, really, is just the tip of the iceberg. House building costs for these families could be \$20 or \$30 million. It is estimated that moving costs will be \$4.9 million, and \$2.7 million annually thereafter. Several "modest" facilities, including a collimation tower, will have to be built on Guam. The Navy also anticipates that most of the ships will be overhauled right on Guam, giving a welcome boost to the Naval Ship Repair Facility. The stationing of the ships should also provide a surge of activities for the Naval Station, the Naval Hospital, the Naval Magazine, and the Naval Communication Center, all of which will play a part in the home porting of the ships.

Our only objection is that the arrival of the first ship isn't scheduled until the spring of 1975—a year away, while the others will arrive at phased intervals from the summer of 1975 to the summer of 1976. This delay may be partially due to the home building project of the Navy, although it is apparent that Guam, today, has an available surplus of local houses and apartments.

Let's hope the Navy gets together with GovGuam immediately on such things as additional power, telephone, and other services, and especially with the Department of Education on the additional classrooms needed. Most people on Guam are happy with the Navy's announcement, and we'll be delighted to welcome the frigate Preble, the missile destroyers Henry B. Wilsop and Joseph Strauss, and the destroyer escorts Lockwood and Kirt—and all their crews and their families. JCM.