

**OPENING STATEMENT  
REPRESENTATIVE RICHARD W. POMBO  
CHAIRMAN, COMMITTEE ON RESOURCES  
OVERSIGHT HEARING ON GUAM WAR CLAIMS  
REVIEW COMMISSION REPORT**

**JULY 21, 2004**

**On behalf of the full Committee, I would like to welcome everyone in attendance today and specifically our witnesses. We are fortunate to have with us today individuals that have taken the time to fly thousands of miles from their island in the North Pacific Ocean. They have been immersed in the history and stories from the territory of Guam for many months now, and we are grateful to have them here to discuss their findings.**

**Our full Committee oversight hearing will focus on an issue of great importance to the citizens of Guam. We will be examining the report recently submitted by the Guam War Claims Review Commission, which was created by this Committee in the 107<sup>th</sup> Congress. The analysis they undertook displays well the unique military and social history that the United States and the territory of Guam have shared since our presence there began in 1898.**

**I had the unique opportunity to visit Guam and other U.S. insular areas with my fellow Committee members as well as Secretary Gale Norton in January. The time we were able to spend at the War in the Pacific National Historical Park and specifically at Asan [AH-SAHN] Overlook will not be soon forgotten. It serves as a powerful reminder of the bravery of both our U.S. soldiers and the citizens of Guam who also sacrificed for our freedoms.**

**The continued strategic military importance of this area can still be seen daily when in Guam, including the large Navy presence in Apra Harbor and Anderson Air Force Base, which we were also able to see in January.**

**The Guam War Claims review Commission was established to take a serious look at the application of the Guam Meritorious Claims Act of 1945. This law established a commission to distribute war claims not in excess of \$5,000, with higher amounts being sent to Congress for its consideration.**

**The Review Commission's report summarizes and details months of work that included comparing the Guam Meritorious Claims Act to other War Claims laws enacted later in the 1940's and the 1960's. Further, they had the extremely emotional and difficult task of conducting public hearings.**

**At these hearings they witnessed first-hand stories of forced marches, forced labor, and horrific executions. But without their work, we would not be able to have a clear record of the effect of the war on the citizens of Guam, nor would we have a strong historical basis from which to evaluate the report they recently submitted to Congress. It is my hope that our witnesses can explain exactly what their process was in arriving at their formal recommendations.**

**We have panelists here today which should be able to give this Committee a thoughtful viewpoint, as our witnesses represent the people who have been intimately involved in the matters of this territory for many years. Their input today should prove invaluable and the work of the Review Commission can now be properly examined by Congress.**

**Finally, it is important to note that we are holding this hearing on a historic day in the history of our country and a date of particular importance to the people of Guam. I believe the locals call it "Liberation Day," for good reason. Today marks the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the liberation of Guam from Japanese forces on July 21, 1944. Our hearing should shed some light on the nature of the effort in this area of the Pacific theater during World War II and how closely we were able to work with the people of Guam in resisting and defeating the Japanese Empire.**

**I thank the witnesses for coming and look forward to their testimony.**