



# Office of the Speaker **THERESE M. TERLAJE**

*I Mina'trentai Sais na Liheslaturan Guåhan* | 36th Guam Legislature  
Committee on Health, Land, Justice and Culture

## **GALC, DLM oversight to receive updates on notifications of ancestral landowners, among other items**

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE (November 18, 2021 – Hagåtña, Guam)** – Speaker Therese Terlaje, as Chairperson of the Committee on Health, Land, Justice and Culture, is holding an oversight hearing with Guam Ancestral Lands Commission (GALC) and the Department of Land Management (DLM) on Thursday, November 18, 2021. This oversight is a follow-up to the last GALC oversight held in April 2021 which brought to light the status of the promised but still unfulfilled return of federal excess lands, listed since 2017, and other lots removed from or added to the list in 2020.

Today's oversight hearing agenda is on the status of recent or pending transfers, deeds, leases, or licenses between the Government of Guam (GovGuam) and the Federal Government or DoD. Ronald Eclavea, GALC Board of Commissioners Chairperson, John Burch, GALC Executive Director, and Joe Borja, DLM Director have been requested to appear to provide information on the status of notification of ancestral landowners for numerous properties slated for return, including the properties known as "Eagles Field."

Speaker Terlaje has three goals for the oversight hearing:

1. Determine what will be done if the land returned to GovGuam bypasses GALC and ancestral landowners. Pursuant to Title 21, Chapter 80 GCA land returned to GovGuam from DoD must be deeded to GALC, so that the land can be returned to its ancestral landowners.
2. Emphasize the obligation of GALC, DLM, and the Governor of Guam to notify ancestral landowners of the status of their property released, pending release, or denied release. This is also including those owners of properties which GovGuam has announced it will retain for other purposes instead of returning to ancestral landowners.
3. Hear from ancestral landowners who have not been notified or who have felt bypassed in the process of the construction of Guam's new medical campus. Many ancestral landowners and their families have come forward with claims of their exclusion and have brought their concerns to Speaker Terlaje. A portion of this oversight will be used as a space for ancestral landowners to present testimony and ask questions.

Speaker Terlaje believes that the public should have access to information regarding the return of these excess lands. "The issues we will discuss at this upcoming oversight are the same issues discussed by Legislatures before ours, and as we discussed during the April oversight," said Speaker Terlaje. "It is concerning that ancestral landowners are still being left out of this process by our government. I hope that this upcoming oversight will focus on ensuring all actions moving forward surrounding these returned lands center on the rights of ancestral landowners."

Guam Congress Building, 163 Chalan Santo Papa, Hagåtña, Guam 96910

Tel: (671) 472-3586 | Fax: (671) 969-3590 | Email: [senatorterlajeguam@gmail.com](mailto:senatorterlajeguam@gmail.com) | [www.senatorterlaje.com](http://www.senatorterlaje.com)

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The issues to be discussed at the oversight date back to unjust land takings by Naval Governors and the federal government following World War II, and to 2011, when the then-Under Secretary of the Navy promised to pursue a “net negative strategy” for the U.S. Marine Corps relocation of 5,000 troops and their families from Okinawa to Guam. The promise sought a smaller DoD footprint in Guam and the return of underutilized land to GovGuam.

In 2019, a Joint Region Marianas report indicated only 608 acres were returned since, and the same 125.6 acres listed for return in 2017 and 2019 were still listed as pending environmental studies.

In August 2019 pursuant to a process mandated by NDAA 2019 for Governors to request return of additional parcels, Governor Leon Guerrero sent a letter to Secretary of the Navy, Richard V. Spencer requesting to add 2,596 acres of terrestrial land and 17,031 acres of submerged land to the Navy’s excess land inventory. On July 2, 2020, the Secretary of the Navy responded to the Governor, rejecting most of the request except for 9 parcels totaling an estimated 93.66 acres of terrestrial lands and 6,225 acres of submerged lands. Included in this was a 50-acre portion of a 310-acre lot now understood to be the proposed site for Guam’s new medical campus.

On January 15, 2021, the Secretary of the Navy wrote a letter to the Governor confirming the addition of Lots A7a and b Anderson to the list of parcels eligible for return to Guam as requested by the Governor back in August 2019. These Lots contain what is known as “Eagles Field.” According to the Secretary’s July 2020 letter, a 50-acre portion of the site was added to the lists of lands eligible for return; however, the January 2021 letter confirmed an increase to 102 acres. The letter also stated that the Navy would expedite the process and work with the governor’s staff to identify an appropriate interim method to assist with planning and development.

DLM was issued a non-exclusive right of entry from April 9 to August 31, 2021 to Anderson Barrigada Annex Lot A7a and b signed off by the DLM Director and the Real Estate Contracting Officer of the Naval Facilities Engineering Systems command Marianas. To-date the lots contained within “Eagles Field” have yet to be returned to their ancestral landowners, and the ancestral landowners have not received any notification of the plans for their properties.