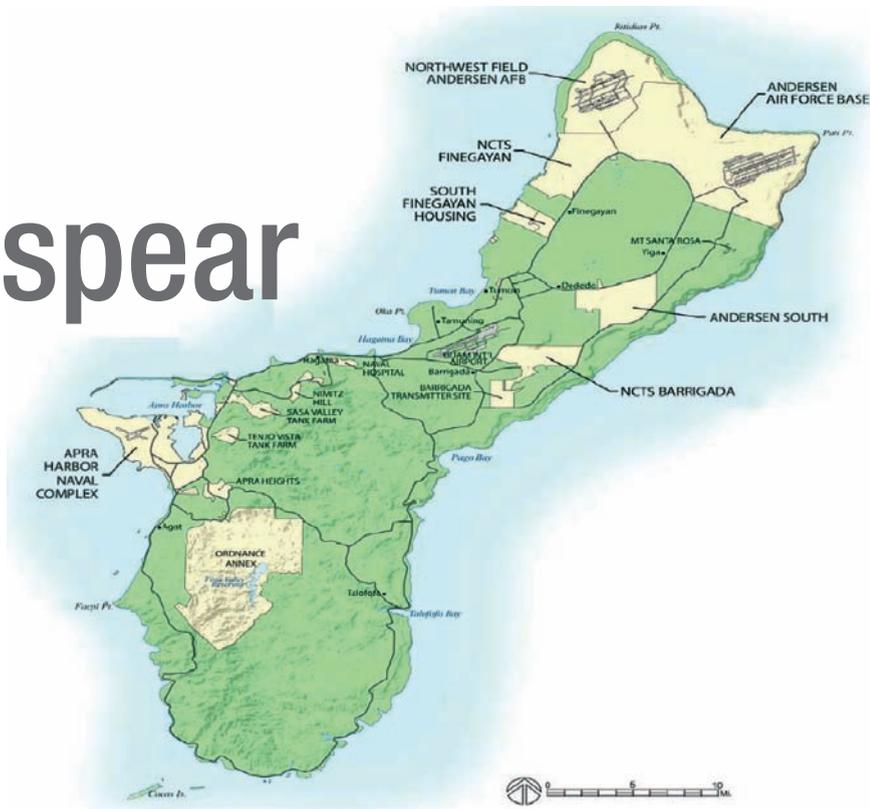


Guam

Tip of the spear

Dr Carlo Kopp

GUAM IN THE MARIANAS ISLAND CHAIN IS THE western-most extent of sovereign United States territory, thus occupying a unique place in US Pacific Rim basing. With unrelenting military capability growth across Asia, the strategic importance of Guam to the US is steadily increasing with time.

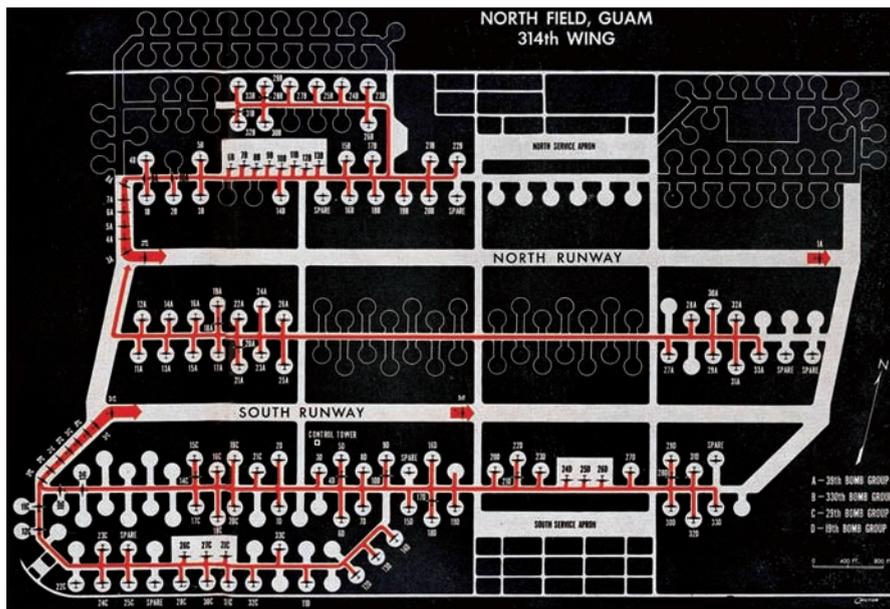


Guam has a complicated history, and likely a complicated future, with the impending redeployment of about 8,000 US Marines from Okinawa to Guam and expansion of the US Air Force and US Naval presence. From a strategic perspective, however, Guam will not be geographically isolated from potential threats, as the proliferation of long range ballistic and cruise missiles in Asia puts this stronghold within reach of these weapons. Public briefing materials indicate that by the end of the West Pacific basing restructure, planned for 2012, the III Marine Expeditionary Force will be sited at Guam. This will coincide with further growth across all US military forces in Guam. The US Air Force is to increase the number of transiently deployed fighters, bombers and tankers at Andersen, and will likely permanently base

Global Hawks there. The US Navy is to increase the number of logistical vessels operating from Apra Harbour, and provide more frequent transient berthing for carriers, as well as basing new HSV hulls at Apra. The US Army is to locate an Air Defence Battalion with 630 personnel and 900 dependants on Guam. While this expansion increases military capability that can be projected into Asia and worldwide, perhaps the biggest longer-term issue for Guam is in its defensive capability, in that most of its facilities are not hardened. This has not been a problem in the past, as no nation in the West Pacific had the reach to hit Guam, other than Soviet strategic bombers and ballistic missiles during the Cold War. This is changing, with China developing a strategic

bomber force, likely around indigenous new-built turbofan powered Xian H-6K Badgers or imported Tu-22M3 Backfires, deploying terminally guided Intermediate Range Ballistic Missiles and DH-10 cruise missiles on nuclear attack submarines. Guam post-2010, like all US basing in the West Pacific, will be under the footprint of Chinese ballistic missiles and cruise missiles, all weapons with the potential to render these bases unusable in combat. During the Cold War the US conducted the Tab-Vee program across NATO-hosted bases to provide hardened aircraft shelters, the aim being to deny the Soviets the option of rapidly crippling all US air bases in the theatre using conventionally armed ballistic missiles and fighter-bombers armed with cluster munitions, dumb bombs and some precision guided munitions. No such effort was ever conducted in the Pacific.

The strategic reality now is that China and other nations across the region are acquiring a diverse and large warstock, spanning smart bombs with a range of different guidance systems, standoff missiles, cruise missiles and terminally guided ballistic missiles, the latter exemplified by the DF-21 series. This presents the US with the unenviable reality that its unhardened West Pacific basing infrastructure will be directly exposed to the largest global concentration of precision guided munitions other than the US national war stock, in fact a much higher concentration than deployed by the Warsaw Pact in the last years of the Cold War. This amounts to a more dangerous strategic environment pitted against basing, which is no more hardened than continental US basing facilities. The strategic consideration for Australia is thus simple: if the US does not harden Guam and other West Pacific basing against precision guided munitions attacks, the result of any major regional conflict could be a significant loss of US forward deployed capabilities as these bases are crippled and rendered unusable.



The Marianas became the principal site for US B-29 raids against Japan. Airfields were built on Saipan, Tinian, Rota and Guam for this purpose. The North West and North Fields on Guam were part of this chain, and post war North Field became Andersen AFB. The 314th Bomber Wing was the first unit to occupy North Field.



Andersen AFB is now home to rotating detachments of heavy bombers, home based in the continental US.



The B-2A is now a regular visitor at Andersen AFB. To support such deployments, a transportable hangar was designed, permitting field maintenance of stealth materials.

THE HISTORY OF GUAM

Guam is largest of the Micronesian islands and the southernmost volcanic island in the Mariana's chain, first discovered by Europeans in 1521 during Magellan's circumnavigation of the globe. Inhabitants since 2000 B.C. are the indigenous Chamoru people, best known for constructing stone megaliths.

The Spanish, by then established in the Philippines, initiated colonisation of the Marianas in 1668, when a party of Jesuits arrived to convert the islanders to Christianity. This was not a happy union, resulting eventually in an indigenous insurgency, Spanish reprisals, and a claimed collapse from a population of 150,000 down to 5,000. Most of the Chamoru were relocated to Guam, and their vacated lands repopulated by Filipinos and Carolinians.

Spain sold the Northern Marianas to Imperial Germany in 1899, while Guam was lost to the United States a year earlier in 1898, under the treaty of Paris. The US retained control of Guam until 1941, when advancing Japanese forces overran the island. The Japanese were well established in the Northern Marianas, having occupied these at the beginning of the Great War and administering them under League of Nations mandate since 1918. The Japanese heavily fortified the Marianas, using them as forward operating bases and integrating them into the chain of defences around the Japanese home islands. Many Japanese and indigenous Okinawans were relocated to the islands to support the Japanese military.

The US invasion force of World War II landed on the beaches of Saipan in June 1944, losing over 3,000 troops in overwhelming the 29,000 strong Japanese garrison. The Japanese counter-attack, the Battle of the Philippine Sea, resulted in a rout of the Japanese fleet and the now famous 'Marianas

Turkey Shoot' during which hundreds of Japanese naval aircraft were lost. Within weeks US forces overwhelmed the Marianas and began construction of a cluster of airfields on which to base B-29 bombers for attacks on Japan. Tinian Island became the nucleus, with the four Japanese built runways rebuilt and an additional two constructed. Guam's Apra Harbour was rebuilt, and the North and NorthWest Field sites on Guam were developed for B-29s. Saipan was the site for two B-29 runways at Kobler and Isely Fields. The first B-29 raid against Japan originated from the Marianas in late November 1944. The B-29s fire bombed Japan's cities, mined Japan's shipping lanes and, ultimately, delivered two nuclear weapons, bringing the Pacific war to a close in 1945.

With the end of World War II and the slowly escalating Cold War, the Marianas remained a strategically important site for the United States, although bases in Japan and the Philippines were primary sites for projecting power into Asia. Guam's North Field hosted the only heavy bomber unit to remain deployed in the Pacific after 1945. North Field was renamed North Guam Air Force Base in 1947, and then renamed again to Andersen AFB in 1949, after Brig. Gen. James R. Andersen who was lost while ferrying a B-24 across the Pacific.

Guam became an important staging point for aircraft deploying to the Western Pacific bases. During the Cold War, Andersen AFB hosted B-36, B-47, B-50, B-52, B-29, KC-97 and KC-135 aircraft flown by Strategic Air Command.

The escalating conflict in Vietnam saw Guam reprise its 1944-1945 role as a bomber base, becoming a key operational base for B-52 raids flown against North Vietnam, and ground forces in the South. In June 1965, 27 B-52s launched from Andersen to fly the first of the long running series

of Arc Light sorties against PAVN troops in the South. By early 1972, Andersen hosted 153 'Buffs', being flown against PAVN targets. The US Air Force states that no less than five miles of taxiway were required to park these aircraft.

The peak of operations from Andersen occurred during the 11 days of the Linebacker II bombing campaign in late 1972 when 379, or 52 per cent of the total number of B-52 sorties flown, were launched from its runways. On one occasion, no less than 87 B-52s took off in under two hours.

At the end of the Vietnam War Andersen returned to its peacetime role as a strategic base and logistical hub for Western Pacific operations. The base has played an important logistical role in every major contingency since then, supporting operations in the Persian Gulf and Afghanistan.

Ongoing tensions with North Korea over its nuclear program, and the growing militarisation of the West Pacific region has increased Guam's prominence as a forward operating location. For years, Andersen AFB hosted continuous rotating deployments of B-52H, B-1B and B-2A bombers. The recent crash of a B-2A on takeoff from Andersen, due to water ingress into the flight control sensors, occurred during such a deployment from the bombers' home base in Missouri.

THE PRESENT

Guam currently hosts a range of US military facilities, divided between US Navy and US Air Force assets. In the near future, Guam will also have a substantial US Marine Corps presence, as units are relocated from Okinawa in Japan.

The US Air Force presence is concentrated at Andersen AFB, home base to the base support 36th Wing, and now hosts a permanent deployment of heavy bombers, rotated through the base from US



A B-29 of the 330th BG, 314th BW, undergoing maintenance at North Field, Guam, in 1945. Gen Curtis LeMay's B-29s burned down most major cities in Japan, as well as destroying more coastal shipping than Navy submarines did by mining shipping lanes.



The Vietnam conflict saw Guam heavily used as a base for B-52s conducting Arc Light raids in the South, and later the Linebacker II raids against the North. Up to 153 B-52s were flown at any time from Andersen AFB.



Parking and managing the flow of B-52s operating from Andersen AFB presented major issues during the intensive bombing campaigns of the Vietnam conflict. These Buffs are about to sortie during Linebacker.



Clockwise from left: SSN-21 Seawolf entering Apra Harbour, Guam. Apra is home port to Submarine Squadron 15, comprising a tender and three Los Angeles class attack submarines.

Apra includes a valuable shipyard facility for the repair of naval vessels. Depicted is SSN-711 USS San Francisco undergoing emergency repairs at Apra after an underwater collision with a seamount near Guam in 2005.

Kilo Wharf at Apra Harbour is a munitions loading facility. This aircraft carrier is reloading its magazines at Kilo Wharf before departing for operations.

based bomber wings. The base also frequently hosts fighter units, rotating through from fighter wings home based in the US. Regular exercises involve Japanese Air Self Defence Force fighter units flying out of Guam, especially to make use of the bombing range in the Marianas. The live fire range is located at Farallon de Medinilla Island (FDM), 45 NMI from Saipan, a 200-acre site leased from the Marianas Commonwealth since 1975. Earlier this year an F-22 Raptor dropped live JDAMs on the range.

Andersen is expanding and upgrading its facilities, including an RQ-4 Global Hawk UAV maintenance complex. In strategic terms, Andersen is a key geographical hub for the US Air Force, as it provides for coverage of South East Asia and Southern China. Moreover, it sits outside the striking radius of most aircraft based on the Asian mainland, unlike the bases in Japan and South Korea.

The US Navy's presence in Guam is no less important strategically, with facilities centred around Apra Harbour, a natural deep-water anchorage on the western coast of Guam. The northern portions of Apra are a civilian port and the main hub for commercial traffic through Guam. The southern portions of the port belong to the US Navy. The 4,000 ft Orote airfield is located on the Orote peninsula to the west of Apra. The Navy operates Apra Harbour, the Guam Ordnance Annex, Naval Computer and Telecommunications Station [NCTS] at Finegayan Point. The former Naval Air Station Agana has been sold and is now Guam International Airport, with dual 8,000 ft runways. Apra Harbour is a major Pacific hub for the US Navy, and includes a submarine base built during the

Cold War to support a squadron of Polaris SSBNs, a naval shipyard with drydock facilities for the repair of surface ships and submarines, Kilo Wharf capable of loading and unloading ammunition ships to full draft, and handling aircraft carriers. Apra has hosted, since 2001, SUBRON 15, currently comprising the submarine tender USS Frank Cable (AS 40), Los Angeles class attack submarines USS Buffalo (SSN 715), USS City of Corpus Christi (SSN 705) and USS Houston (SSN 713).

The Ordnance Annex Guam, formerly Naval Magazine, is a major munitions storage facility located about one nautical mile south east of Apra. The NCTS at Finegayan is located around five nautical miles north of Guam International airport. Guam is a critical basing hub for the US Navy, not only hosting the submarine squadrons intended to patrol the West Pacific, but also providing a logistical node for replenishment of surface fleet assets such as carriers and supporting surface combatants with munitions, fuel and other stores and provisions.

GUAM — THE FUTURE

The next major development for Guam is the relocation of US Marines from Okinawa, whose presence has been a long running political headache for the US and Japan — the subject of disputes between indigenous Okinawans and the central government in Tokyo, compounded by population growth and creeping urban encroachment generating noise complaints.

Relocation of the Marines is part of a much larger package of base restructuring and relocation measures, negotiated with the Japanese

Government in 2006. These measures include consolidation of air force basing in Japan, co-location of a JASDF air defence command centre at Yokota AFB in the Tokyo suburbs, and relocation of the Marines and up to 10,000 dependants to Guam. Japan will provide a substantial portion of the tens of billions of funding required for the basing restructure. This effort is the single largest restructure in West Pacific US basing since the withdrawal of US forces from the Philippines at the end of the Cold War.

Okinawa is home to the III Marine Expeditionary Force, with more than 23,000 Marines, supporting Navy personnel and dependants. Marine Corps Air Station Futenma is to be transferred to the JSDF as part of the restructure, and a new airfield was to be built offshore. This plan has been complicated by a campaign conducted by ethnic Okinawans to have all of the Futenma basing relocated to Guam, in direct opposition to Tokyo.

Overall estimates for deployed personnel and dependants indicate growth from 2007 figures of 6,420 active duty personnel and 7,690 dependants to 19,230 active duty personnel and 19,140 dependants, a 170 per cent increase in numbers.

In conclusion, Guam is continuing to grow in strategic importance as the Asian arms race continues, unabated; however, the potential of post-2010 attack using long-range missiles from bases in Asia is increasing — and the absence of hardened facilities increases its strategic vulnerability.