



# Author: Move troops back to U.S.

**By Doloris Cogan**

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It's time to start thinking outside the box. I have read the Region IX EPA comments on the proposed move to Guam of U.S. troops on Okinawa. My conclusion is that both the environmental impact and the cost would be absolutely devastating.

Therefore, I think it's time to start moving those troops and their families back to the United States, where there are plenty of empty barracks and unemployed workers to build whatever may be lacking. In this space age of the Internet, the Predator, fast fighters and cargo planes, security no longer depends on large forward bases. There is no need for a heavier military footprint on Guam than the island already has.

There is no need to train American pilots on foreign soil or on the Pacific islands. Our National Guard forces from all 50 states serving in Iraq and Afghanistan have proved that.

Many entrepreneurs on Guam will say this idea would deprive them of economic opportunities desperately needed on the island. To them I say, go after federal appropriations for improved roads, schools, trash removal, toxic waste cleanup, land surveys and outstanding reparations for land confiscated by the military decades ago. All that would provide jobs.

You now have the attention of President Barack Obama and Congress. Strike while the iron is hot! The Organic Act of Guam is almost 60 years old, and your infrastructure could use some repairs. Some of the money saved by not making that expensive move from Okinawa to Guam could be used for the above purposes.

Blaine Harden raised the proposed move of the Marines above the radar by writing what became a front-page story in The Washington Post on March 22.



**Book for Obama:** Doloris Cogan, author of "We Fought the Navy and Won: Guam's Quest for Democracy," gives President Obama, then a U.S. senator, a copy of her book during a campaign stop in Indiana. (Photo courtesy of Doloris Cogan)

I was delighted to see Lt. Gov. Mike Cruz quoted in Harden's news story, along with many sons and daughters of the heroes in my book, "We Fought the Navy and Won: Guam's Quest for Democracy." I met Cruz and many of those sons and daughters in July of 2008 when my book was brand new and I went to Guam for the celebration of Liberation Day.

Guam is at another real crossroads of its history. Decisions should not be made quickly or without full discussion. Saving the island for future generations is up to you.

I met Obama twice at public rallies when he was campaigning for the presidency in Indiana and had an opportunity to ask questions, as well as give him my book, which he later acknowledged with a short personal letter. I'm proud of the picture I have of the two of us and my book, which I used as my 2008 Christmas card. His decision to visit Guam tells me he knows a lot about the island and the implications of moving more troops there.

(Recently) I was in San Diego, signing copies of my book at the Chamorro Cultural Fest. I was thrilled to meet so many Chamorros who are well-educated and holding responsible positions in the Navy and private industry. Guam's young people are specialists in the high technologies and communications. I'm convinced they can turn those skills into new professions and industries on Guam, supplementing the military economy and tourism.

What's more, they understand and practice democracy. They could be USAID workers and ambassadors to Third-World countries, and would know better than to try to impose their (or our) culture on their hosts.

This is a great time to be alive and meet the challenges ahead. My interest in Guam is as strong now as it was 60 years ago when I wrote and edited the Guam Echo, airmailed monthly from Washington to 500 Guam members of the Institute of Ethnic Affairs. We wrote in the Guam Echo about "self-determination" for indigenous inhabitants all over the world, and in San Diego I met a few Chamorro leaders hoping and searching for more of that and less "military domination" for Guam. Self-determination is an "ideal" still discussed at the United Nations, and in the context of the proposed move and the the civil rights of the local Chamorros, it could come up again.

Now is the time to work together to find solutions to whatever serious problems exist. I tend to agree with Theodore Parker, who said, "I do not pretend to understand the moral universe; the arc is a long one ... and from what I see I am sure it bends towards justice."

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*As writer/editor of the Guam Echo from 1947 to 1950, Doloris Cogan helped get the Organic Act of Guam through Congress, and from 1951 to 1955, she served as Pacific Island Assistant in the Department of the Interior, implementing the act.*

*Cogan is the author of the book "We Fought the Navy And Won: Guam's Quest for Democracy" available for sale in the Guampedia Store at:  
<http://astore.amazon.com/wwwquampediac-20>*