

# Audit on MEC Processes on Guam Reveals Inadequacies

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**Washington, DC** The Inspector General of the U.S. Department of Defense released Report Number DODIG-2020-093, "*Audit of the Department of Defense's Processes to Identify and Clear Munitions and Explosives of Concern During Construction on Guam.*" The audit sought to "determine whether DoD personnel implemented safety standards and quality assurance controls for addressing MEC during military construction projects on Guam, and whether DoD personnel properly managed safety concerns and readiness related to MEC on Guam in accordance with military standards and risk-management instructions."

The study reviewed the overall MEC clearance process for military construction (MILCON) projects at Joint Region Marianas (JRM), the joint U.S. military command on Guam. It is estimated that The Battle of Guam during WWII resulted in some 11,000 MEC items due to heavy air, sea, and land bombings.

A summary of the findings of the audit in the report states that, "DoD personnel did not properly plan and manage the MEC program at the JRM." It goes on to state that, "DoD personnel did not consistently implement safety standards and quality assurance (QA) controls during MILCON projects." Auditors also concluded, "DoD personnel did not establish adequate plans and processes for managing MEC clearance requirements and safety concerns for MILCON projects on Guam."

These issues contributed to financial losses as well, because the failure to adequately plan for MEC clearance led to a "difficulty completing projects within the planned costs and schedules." Such delays in schedules affected the DoD's ability to carry out joint exercises in the area which then led to a decrease in readiness.

The audit does make several recommendations for addressing the issue related to planning for MEC during MILCON projects. The report states, "Among other recommendations, we recommend that the Under Secretary of Defense for Acquisition and Sustainment issue guidance for estimating and presenting MEC clearance costs in DD Form 1391 that will enable personnel to assess the accuracy of the MEC budget and enable DoD leaders to refine future MILCON projects. We also recommend that the Chief of Naval Operations conduct analysis to determine if a more efficient process exists to approve deviation requests from installation commanders in a timely manner to reduce further schedule delays and associated cost increases for MILCON projects."

It is also recommended that the, "NAVFAC Commander perform a review of staffing levels and equipment required to perform adequate contract oversight at NAVFAC Marianas and identify potential solutions to address vacant positions; and conduct an analysis to examine potential funding sources to determine if a more accurate and equitable method is available for MEC clearance QA."

According to the report, The Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Infrastructure, responding for the Under Secretary of Defense for Acquisition and Sustainment, agreed with the recommendations, which will remain open until addressed.

What does this mean for the UXO industry? Potentially it should lead to new clearance contract

opportunities and a renewed call for QA and efficiency in MEC removal operations at JRM and perhaps beyond.

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