

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

February 21, 2011

The following is a joint statement from the Guam Preservation Trust, We Are Guahan, and the National Trust for Historic Preservation regarding the February 16, 2011 revised Programmatic Agreement:

Marine Firing Ranges Still Impact Pãgat

Pãgat is a cultural heritage site and a sacred place to the Chamorro people and the wrong place for weapons training. The latest version of the Programmatic Agreement does not address the fundamental concern that our groups and Guam's community have expressed from the outset: alternative locations for the firing ranges have not been adequately explored. The rationale offered by the Department of Defense (DOD) for dismissing alternative sites on Guam and Tinian was legally insufficient when the Record of Decision was issued last fall, and it remains legally insufficient. This is a principal basis of our lawsuit, which simply asks the DOD to analyze alternatives, several of which we have proposed. This commitment has not been made in the revised Programmatic Agreement.

The PA does not respond to valid concerns from the community regarding the basic adverse impact of conducting live-fire target practice so close to a cultural heritage site. Most alarmingly, the access commitments in the revised Agreement do not appear to reflect any actual change in the DOD plans for the firing ranges. Instead, the DoD has essentially decided to pass on to the public any risks of danger or damage when an estimated 90 rounds of ammunition per month fall outside the target training areas. In other words, DOD's offer to maintain access to Pãgat apparently comes at the expense of public safety. Furthermore, the PA does not resolve serious issues such as the increased likelihood of fires or groundwater contamination in Pãgat Cave.

More steps are necessary to realize Governor Eddie Calvo's dream of truly saving Pãgat. We urge the military to do the right thing for Guam by identifying alternate sites that are more appropriate for the firing ranges.

###

For further information, contact Joe Quinata at 472-9439/40 or jqpreservation@guam.net