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Global Strike Task Force Set for Guam

The Air Force in May announced details of the service's goal to build a Global Strike Task Force on the island of Guam. Strike, mobility, and intelligence-surveillance-reconnaissance aircraft would all operate from the Western Pacific island, which is a United States territory.

The proposal would permanently base 12 aerial refueling tankers and three Global Hawk unmanned aerial vehicles at Guam's Andersen Air Force Base.

The "strike" portion of the task force would be provided by "48 fighter and six bomber aircraft [which] would rotate to Andersen AFB from bases in the 50 states," according to a May 18 notice in the Federal Register.

Approximately 2,400 additional military, civilian, and contractor personnel would be required to support the Global Strike Task Force, according to the notice. "The action would also result in facility construction, addition, and alteration projects."

The Air Force and US Pacific Command have long had their eye on Guam as a logical place to increase American military power.

The island is in the same region as potential hot spots such as the Taiwan Strait, the Korean Peninsula, and the Strait of Malacca, but it is also far enough into the Pacific Ocean to be reasonably safe from enemy counterattack.

Andersen also has long runways, large parking areas, and enormous weapons and fuel storage capacity. Officials are fond of noting that the base hosted hundreds of B-52s during the later days of the Vietnam War, and that the base's infrastructure has continuously been modernized.

—By Adam J. Hebert