

# America's Pacific Stronghold: The Importance of Guam and the CNMI

Positioned at the gateway to Asia, Guam and the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands (CNMI) are stepping into a new era of opportunity, powered by major U.S. defense investment, rising Asian interest and expanding industries that promise long-term economic transformation.

| By Matías Godoy |

**Guam and the Northern Mariana Islands have become central to U.S. strategic planning in the Pacific, a status heightened by growing tensions between Washington and Beijing.** Tourism across both territories remains far below pre-pandemic levels, but the Department of Defense buildup has emerged as the life-line sustaining local economies. Billions of dollars in long-term military investments are reshaping infrastructure, logistics and workforce demand—anchoring both islands more firmly than ever to America's Indo-Pacific strategy.

## Building the Backbone of a Strategic Hub

Guam's construction sector is experiencing one of the most active periods in its history. AIC International, a long-established design-build firm on the island, continues to expand its role in federally funded works. Co-Presidents Michael Stewart and Anthony Stewart emphasize that Guam's current moment “requires companies that understand the complexity of the environment and can deliver consistently in a high-stakes setting.” Their perspective reflects a market defined by tight timelines, security sensitivity, and rising expectations from the Department of Defense.

CMS Corporation also plays a major role in this transformation. With roughly a third of its workload based in Guam, Chairman and CEO Ernest Enrique expects the company to close 2025 between \$220 million and \$250 million in revenue. A backlog of \$550 million and a contract ceiling of USD 41 billion extending to 2035 positions CMS for substantial growth. “The investment is significant,” Enrique said. “Infrastructure is improving, and there is a lot of planning behind how the island will be developed. As a company, we plan to stay here for the long term.” CMS's investment in AI-enabled resource forecasting and compliance tools further strengthens its ability to operate across remote Pacific locations.

Hawaiian Rock Products, active in Guam since 1958, remains indispensable to the island's physical development. President Jere Johnson notes that annual revenue now exceeds \$100 million, about half tied to asphalt paving for roads, highways and military installations. The buildup, he said, “has given us the opportunity to improve our operations, expand our facilities, and modernize our equipment.” Hawaiian Rock employs more than 500 people across Guam, Saipan and Tinian—remarkably, all U.S. citizens—underscoring the company's deep local roots.

Hawaiian Rock Products' expanding quarry and asphalt operations underscore how Guam's construction sector is scaling to meet long-term federal demand, ensuring the island can support sustained military growth and wider infrastructure modernization.

## Digital Infrastructure for a Modern Economy

As construction accelerates, Docomo Pacific is fortifying Guam's digital backbone. CEO Christine Baleto highlights the company's focus on resilience, including 5G expansion and subsea cable redundancy. These investments ensure the island remains technologically competitive and able to support defense, commercial and community needs. Baleto frames the mission succinctly: enhancing quality of life while strengthening Guam's reliability in a region where digital security matters as much as physical infrastructure.

Docomo Pacific's rapid expansion of fiber-to-the-home, 10-gigabit XGPON capability and new undersea cable redundancies has also strengthened Guam's overall investment climate, giving both civilian and military users the resilient, high-capacity communications backbone required for modern operations—an essential advantage for companies assessing the island's readiness to support data-intensive industries, advanced manufacturing and long-term digital infrastructure growth.

## Understanding Land and Housing Constraints

The speed of development has intensified pressure on Guam's land and housing markets. Cornerstone Valuation President Siska Hutapea stresses that accurate data is crucial for decision-makers navigating rising prices, limited inventory and infrastructure strain. Her firm's analytical tools and GIS-driven models help clarify long-term planning needs. “Reliable valuation is essential for both economic development and community well-being,” Hutapea noted, underscoring the importance of informed investment in a small-island environment.

## CNMI: Rebranding and Repositioning Itself

Although much of the action is centered in Guam, the Northern Mariana Islands are expanding their economic identity through powerful investment incentives unique in the U.S. system. Commonwealth Economic Development Authority (CEDA) Executive Director Derek Sasamoto has played a central role in packaging these advantages for global investors.

His team's new investment packet has already attracted high-tech manufacturers, including a zero-emission vehicle and equipment company preparing an estimated \$500 million multistage investment. “Investors are blown away by the advantages,” Sasamoto said. “You will not be alone when you come to the Marianas. We are with you the whole way.”

The Marianas Visitors Authority is also repositioning tourism as a long-term economic engine through a new global brand centered on authenticity and cultural experience. Managing Director Jamika Tajeron underscores the urgency of renewal, noting that the Marianas must “create far-from-ordinary experiences that visitors can't find elsewhere,” a strategy designed to rebuild demand while unifying partners across the community.

## The People Behind the Future

In the CNMI, Tano Group President Alexis Fallon brings a distinctive perspective focused on workforce development. Her company, with a 31-year track record in industrial construction, has built more than 38 large fuel tanks across Micronesia. Yet her sharpest insights concern wages and training. “This is not a shortage of manpower—it is the inability for it to be paid well,” Fallon said. She argues that discrepancies in federal wage structures undermine the islands' ability to retain skilled tradespeople, even as demand surges.

Despite these challenges, she sees “a wonderful opportunity” to use the buildup to educate young residents and integrate them into high-paying technical careers. For Fallon, investing in people and improving wage pathways is essential to expanding the middle class and preparing the CNMI for the next 20 years.

## The Pacific's Strategic Pivot

Guam and the Northern Mariana Islands are entering a new phase of strategic and economic relevance. Military spending continues to be the primary catalyst, but interest from Japanese, Korean and Taiwanese investors—traditionally focused on tourism—is now shifting toward high-tech manufacturing, pharmaceuticals and clean energy. At the same time, both territories confront high shipping costs, rising housing prices and labor limitations inherent to island economies.

Yet the outlook remains compelling. From construction and digital infrastructure to valuation, training and investment promotion, the region's business leaders share a common vision: to build a resilient, opportunity-rich future aligned with America's strategic interests. Their efforts are transforming these Pacific islands from remote outposts into engines of growth and essential components of U.S. stability in a rapidly evolving Indo-Pacific landscape.



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DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY



## Building Guam's Future Through Enduring Partnerships

AIC International Inc. has been shaping Guam's construction landscape for nearly four decades through its long-standing collaboration with the U.S. military, local government, and island-based partners.

| By Matías Godoy |

### AIC International Inc. has stood at the center of Guam's construction and infrastructure development for nearly four decades.

Founded in the late 1970s by the late Henry Stewart, the company began its operations in Seattle before shifting its focus to the Pacific region. Under the leadership of brothers Michael and Anthony Stewart, co-Presidents of AIC, the company has evolved from a small regional builder into one of Guam's most respected and trusted design-build contractors, with projects spanning Guam, Saipan, Kwajalein, and throughout the Pacific Islands.

AIC's long history of collaboration with the U.S. military has defined much of its growth. The company specializes in design-build projects for defense facilities—ranging from new construction to complex renovations and waterfront works. Today, AIC is part of two multi-year design-build programs with the U.S. Air Force and the U.S. Navy, valued at up to \$700 million and \$600 million respectively, extending through 2031. These contracts not only affirm AIC's technical capabilities but also secure a consistent pipeline of work that supports Guam's broader defense and economic ecosystem. In parallel, AIC continues to serve the local government through projects with agencies such as the Guam Waterworks Authority, reinforcing the island's essential public infrastructure and long-term resilience.

Strategic partnerships are central to AIC's operating model. The company collaborates closely with leading local architectural and engineering firms and maintains cooperative relationships with fellow contractors on island—sharing resources and technical expertise. Meanwhile, it invests heavily in its own workforce training, safety, and technology programs to ensure every project meets the highest standards of quality and performance.

Through these alliances and its enduring local presence, AIC has remained deeply committed to building Guam's future. "We see ourselves as a local contractor," said Co-President Michael Stewart. "Our focus has always been to keep investment and opportunity right here on the island."



AIC International, Inc.



## Engineering the Next Wave of Global Growth

CMS Corporation is accelerating its global expansion as demand for resilient, mission-critical defense infrastructure continues to rise worldwide.

| By Matías Godoy |

**Over nearly three decades, CMS has evolved from a mechanical, piping and fabrication specialist into a large general contractor with a track record of more than 450 Department of Defense projects around the world.** That experience now supports one of the industry's most

significant federal contracting portfolios. "We are going to close 2025 with somewhere between \$220 and \$250 million of revenue," said Chairman & CEO Ernest Enrique, citing a backlog near \$550 million and contract ceiling capacity of roughly \$41 billion stretching through 2035. Much of that expansion is driven by an additional \$30 billion in new indefinite delivery/indefinite quantity (IDIQ) contracts secured in the last six months, including major vehicles such as the Navy's \$15 billion Pacific Deterrence Initiative (PDI) MACC and the Air Force's \$15 billion Worldwide Comprehensive Construction & Engineering (C2E) contract.

Today, about half of CMS's business is based in the continental United States, with the rest spanning Hungary, Spain, Portugal, the Bahamas, Japan, the Philippines, Australia, South Korea, and remote locations such as Wake Island. "We go where our clients need us in support of their mission and this has taken us around the world," said Enrique. CMS has a long-standing presence in the Pacific. Since establishing an office in Guam in 2010, they have successfully executed dozens of projects ranging from fuel system repairs to major airfield facility renovations, supported by a network of local subcontractors. This regional platform is mirrored across CMS's global markets, driven by a combination of client need, CMS know-how and strategic partnerships.

Technology is shaping the company's next phase of growth and global expansion. "Innovation and emerging technologies are fundamental drivers of our long-term success," said Enrique. CMS is deploying an AI-enabled enterprise resource planning system to enhance forecasting, project management, and compliance, while also investing in AI to streamline proposal development, document management, and risk analysis.



## Constructing Tomorrow's Islands, Today: DOCOMO PACIFIC's Vision for a Resilient and Future-Ready Marianas

How CEO Christine Baleto is leading the transformation of the region's digital infrastructure.

| By Matías Godoy |

**As the Marianas enters a new era of digital connectivity, DOCOMO PACIFIC is leading the way with a clear mission: to build the region's most resilient, secure, and future-ready network.** From expanding its 5G footprint to reinforcing its fiber backbone and adding critical undersea redundancies, it continues to invest in the infrastructure that powers these islands—today and tomorrow.

Innovation remains central to its strategy. Supported by the global expertise of its parent company, NTT DOCOMO—the world's fifth-largest telecommunications provider—and strengthened through partnerships with Lynk Global Satellite and AT&T FirstNet, the company brings world-class technology to communities. These collaborations help it adapt quickly and deliver solutions tailored to the Marianas' unique needs.

With Guam's growing role as a strategic digital hub in the INDOPACOM region, network security and reliability are paramount. Its ongoing investments support the needs of government, military, businesses, and residents alike, ensuring confidence in a region where communication is critical.

Its commitment to the future also extends to people. By bringing its 24-hour Call Center operations back in-house, the company improved customer service scores by 190 percent and elevated its NPS by 68 percent. This move reflects its belief in building local talent and creating long-term career pathways for the communities it serves.

DOCOMO PACIFIC has delivered numerous firsts across the Marianas, including launching the region's first 5G mobile service, 5Gbps fiber internet, and multi-gig Fiber-to-the-Home offerings. Its partnership with Lynk enables direct-to-device satellite connectivity—extending coverage to remote villages, maritime fleets, and emergency responders without the cost of traditional infrastructure.

Guided by a sustained multimillion-dollar investment program, its strategy is clear: strengthen networks, elevate customer experience, and empower the Marianas with technology built for the next generation. At DOCOMO PACIFIC, they are not just preparing for the future—they are building it, together with the community.



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