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Challenges in Power Reliability and Affordability Common Across U.S. Territories

From the USVI to Guam, U.S. territories contend with a shared struggle for energy reliability amid high costs and geographic isolation, highlighting the urgent need for diversified energy solutions and robust federal support

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The Guam Power Authority

In the quest for reliable and affordable energy, the U.S. Virgin Islands share a common plight with other U.S. territories like Guam, Puerto Rico, and the Northern Mariana Islands. These regions face similar challenges primarily due to geographic isolation, a heavy reliance on imported fuels, and the financial burdens associated with shifting towards renewable energy sources.

The V.I. Water and Power Authority has long been criticized for its unreliability in providing electricity, a sentiment that resonates across many territories. For example, Guam, heavily dependent on imported petroleum like the USVI, anticipates energy shortages. The Guam Power Authority (GPA) has already warned of potential rotating outages scheduled for June and July 2024 if energy demand exceeds supply during peak hours.

Despite these challenges, Guam is actively pursuing renewable energy projects to diversify its energy mix. However, the transition is slowed by high fuel costs, which have historically inflated electricity prices, leading to legislative interventions such as consumer bill credits.

Similarly, the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands struggles with its near-total dependence on imported petroleum for energy. The region's vulnerability to frequent typhoons exacerbates its energy challenges, disrupting supplies and damaging infrastructure. Efforts to develop solar and wind energy are ongoing, though the risk of typhoons, like the destructive Typhoon Yutu in 2018, poses significant setbacks.

Puerto Rico's energy sector is perhaps the most troubled, plagued by high operational costs, aging infrastructure, and a dependence on costly imported oil. Mismanagement and underinvestment have further deteriorated the system, compounded by severe damages from natural disasters like hurricanes and earthquakes. Recent initiatives aiming to privatize parts of the electric utility seek to enhance efficiency and reliability while also pushing to expand renewable energy capacity.

The USVI, while smaller and more isolated, faces similar dilemmas. Gross [mismanagement](#) and the high cost of imported fuels significantly hinder efforts to stabilize power costs and diversify energy sources. These shared difficulties underscore the urgent need for innovative solutions and robust federal support tailored to the unique challenges of U.S. territories to achieve energy independence and enhance sustainability.