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Guam OPA CFEs Enhance Expertise in Financial Investigations through MLARS Seminar

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Hagåtña, Guam – The Office of Public Accountability (OPA) has taken a significant step in strengthening its capabilities in financial investigations by participating in the Money Laundering Asset Recovery Section (MLARS) Financial Investigations Seminar. This specialized training, hosted by the U.S. Department of Justice, provided OPA with a unique opportunity to acquire insights into the latest techniques and strategies in money laundering and asset recovery.

The MLARS Financial Investigations Seminar, which took place from January 16 to 18, 2024, is traditionally held in South Carolina. This initiative by MLARS to conduct the training in Guam is the first of its kind in at least two decades. The training welcomed prosecutors, federal and local agents/investigators, and staff involved in financial investigations from across the U.S. and Pacific.

Among the participants were Accountability Auditors Jerrick Hernandez, Maria Thyrsa Bagana, Frederick Jones, Thomas Eladio Battung, and Ren Erbil Jalandoni, who are all Certified Fraud Examiners (CFEs) at OPA. The Association of Certified Fraud Examiners mandates members to annually complete Continuing Professional Education directly related to fraud and ethics to maintain the CFE designation, a requirement fulfilled by the seminar.

The three-day seminar featured instructional sessions delivered by some of the foremost experts in the field. The seminar involved participants working in small groups, each comprised of a prosecutor, agents/investigators, staff, and an MLARS facilitator. These groups engaged in a hands-on financial investigation, navigating through a detailed, video-based case study from inception to resolution.

The seminar offers participants the chance to enhance their skills in various aspects of financial investigations. This includes applying techniques to broaden the scope of criminal investigations, identifying and tracking assets for potential seizure and forfeiture, determining which money laundering statutes have been violated and should be charged, deciding on investigative techniques and strategies, analyzing bank documents and tax returns, and anticipating legal defenses while strategizing ways to overcome them.

