

SECNAV Del Toro Visits Republic of Palau



KOROR, Republic of Palau (March 1, 2024) – Secretary of the Navy (SECNAV) Carlos Del Toro visited the Republic of Palau Feb. 29 to March 1 for a series of strategic engagements on the expanding relationship with the critically important Compact of Free Association (COFA) state.

During his visit, Secretary Del Toro met with U.S. Ambassador to the Republic of Palau Joel Ehrendreich and members of his team, as well as with President Surangel Whipps, Jr., to discuss the expanding relationship with Palau and the United States' critically important defense posture in the region.

"President Whipps has been a marvelous reflection of all the people of Palau and a persistent supporter of the U.S.-Palau relationship, which directly supports a free and open Indo-Pacific region," said Secretary Del Toro. "I can assure you

that the United States remains committed to Palau's national security, and I remain one of Palau's strongest advocates in Washington, to include with Congress."

Secretary Del Toro also thanked President Whipps for his support of the U.S. Navy Seabees and U.S. Marines engineering and construction work in Palau, including a runway improvement project in Peleliu by the Marines from the 7th Engineer Support Battalion (ESB). Secretary Del Toro visited the runway project. He also remembered the lives lost by both the U.S. and Japan by laying a wreath at Orange Breach in Peleliu, where the first U.S. invasion of forces landed during World War II, during the Battle of Peleliu. The 80th anniversary of the Battle of Peleliu is this September.

President Whipps thanked the Secretary for the Office of Naval Research funded island resilience data analysis and visualization dashboard, as well as the two Navy funded coordinators to operate it for the Office of the President, which arrived two days before Secretary Del Toro's visit.

"Secretary Del Toro's visit affirms the longstanding friendship and ironclad partnership between the United States and Palau, which includes the efforts of Palauans serving in the U.S. Navy for decades and still to this day. Now – more than ever – the cooperation between our two countries is contributing to the stability of the region," said Ambassador Ehrendreich.

Secretary Del Toro's visit to Palau is part of a series of strategic engagements in the Indo-Pacific to promote the protection of the maritime commons in line with his Maritime Statecraft efforts.

Secretary Del Toro trip to Palau was the third leg of travel through the Indo-Pacific, which included stops in the Republic of Korea and Japan. The trip is an important component in Secretary Del Toro's Maritime Statecraft efforts to

reinvigorate America's comprehensive maritime power. A whole-of-government effort, Maritime Statecraft aligns closely with the Pentagon's National Defense Industrial Strategy, which calls for venture capital and new ideas to revive the U.S. industrial base.