Coast Guard Sails to Islands of Federated States of Micronesia with Needed Equipment, Supplies



Release from U.S. Coast Guard Forces Micronesia/Sector Guam

POHNPEI, Federated States of Micronesia – The USCGC Oliver Henry (WPC 1140) crew arrived at Dekhitik Harbor in Pohnpei on Feb. 1 as part of an international effort to deliver essential supplies and equipment to the drought-affected outer islands of Nukuoro and Kapingamarangi Atolls.

Due to the El Niño weather phenomenon, these remote communities required immediate assistance, including water purification solutions, to combat the scarcity of potable water.

Embarked on this vital mission were RO technicians Mr. Dudley Lorrin from the International Organization for Migration (IOM) and Mr. Jimmy Edward from the Pohnpei Department of Public Safety (DPS). The mission was critical in providing immediate relief, including the transportation and operational setup of Reverse Osmosis (RO) units capable of converting seawater into drinkable water. These units, crucial for the survival of the island communities, can produce up to 350 gallons of fresh water daily and are powered by solar panels or high-capacity batteries.

Significantly, the deployment was supported by various partners. The U.S. Navy Seabees repaired an IOM Reverse Osmosis unit in preparation for the mission. The Government of Australia's Pacific Maritime Security Program donated specialized heavy-duty batteries to ensure the RO units' functionality. Additionally, the Pohnpei State Government contributed one ton of rice, emphasizing the collaborative nature of this humanitarian operation.

Upon reaching Nukuoro, the USCGC Oliver Henry crew swiftly made an existing RO unit operational with the newly transported batteries, demonstrating adaptability and technical proficiency. Petty Officer 1st Class Kai Ruiz, an electrician's mate, connected two 12V batteries to the island's RO pump using spare parts from both the cutter and the local community—a testament to the crew's resourcefulness and commitment to the mission.

In Kapingamarangi, the crew performed a successful systems check on the local RO unit, confirming its full mission capability. Troubleshooting efforts also extended to the solar system and HF radio, identifying the need for replacement of the decade-old solar batteries and the HF radio antenna—issues earmarked for future attention by local government authorities.

The mission’s cargo included 2,000 lbs of rice, two RO generator kits, three solar panel kits, and medical supplies, directly addressing the immediate needs of Nukuoro and Kapingamarangi. Upon departure, three medical kits, 80 gallons of bottled water donated by U.S. Coast Guard members and brought from Guam, diesel fuel, and various paper products were offloaded in Kapingamarangi, reflecting a comprehensive approach to aid delivery.

“Our visit was more than a delivery mission; it was an opportunity to strengthen ties with the island communities,” said Lt. Ray Cerrato, commanding officer of Oliver Henry. “The crew’s engagement with local schools and villages left a lasting impression, underscoring the U.S. Coast Guard’s commitment to the well-being of these remote populations. The gratitude expressed by the village chiefs and the anticipation of future visits highlight the enduring relationships fostered by these endeavors.”

This mission exemplifies the U.S. Coast Guard’s dedication to humanitarian aid and international cooperation, ensuring the well-being of vulnerable communities in the Pacific. The collective effort of all parties involved, from the initial loading in Guam to the final delivery and operational support on the islands, showcases a unified response to the challenges faced by Nukuoro and Kapingamarangi, reinforcing the U.S. Coast Guard’s role as a pivotal force for good in the region.

USCGC Oliver Henry’s crew is conducting the first U.S. Coast Guard Forces Micronesia/Sector Guam expeditionary patrol of 2024 under Operation Rematau and Operation Blue Pacific. The Oliver Henry is the 40th 154-foot Sentinel-class Fast Response Cutter named for Oliver T. Henry, Jr., an enlisted African American Coast Guard member first to break the color barrier of a then-segregated Service. It homeports in Guam, working with U.S. Coast Guard Forces Micronesia/Sector Guam, which

comprises nearly 300 personnel to provide a significant portion of the U.S. Coast Guard’s enduring regional presence in Oceania.