

USCG Strengthens Partnership with Palau to Combat Illicit Maritime Activity



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From U.S. Coast Guard Forces Micronesia Sector Guam, Sept. 17, 2024

KOROR, Republic of Palau – At the request of the Republic of Palau and in response to their concerns of potential illicit maritime activity occurring in Palau's Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ), U.S. Coast Guard Forces Micronesia Sector Guam (FMSG)

and U.S. Coast Guard Air Station Barbers Point dispatched personnel and equipment to enact the agreement between the U.S. and Palau Concerning Operational Cooperation to Suppress Illicit Transnational Maritime Activity (U.S. – Palau Bilateral Agreement), and in doing so enhanced Palau’s maritime domain awareness.

In the recent joint operation, which occurred Sept. 6-8, 2024, a U.S. Coast Guard HC-130 Hercules and aircrew embarked Palauan enforcement officials and U.S. Coast Guard specialists to patrol over 6,000 miles, identifying numerous illegal fish aggregation devices (FADs) and sighting vessels in and around Palau’s EEZ.

Exercising provisions of the U.S.–Palau bilateral agreement, the operation employed a Palauan air rider, Palau’s Joint Operations Center (JOC), and U.S. Coast Guard liaisons to maximize technologies and maritime domain awareness tools to monitor and patrol Palau’s waters and domestic fishing zones.

“Our collaboration with the Palauan air rider and Palau’s Division of Marine Law Enforcement was instrumental in swiftly identifying illicit activities within Palau’s waters. This mission demonstrates the power of partnership and shared commitment to protecting maritime resources and maintaining sovereignty,” said Lt. Cmdr. Derek Wallin, the U.S. Coast Guard Compact of Free Association maritime advisor.

U.S. Coast Guard liaison officers collaborated with the Division of Marine Law Enforcement and the Joint Operations Center in Koror to enhance maritime domain awareness alongside a U.S. Coast Guard HC-130 Hercules aircrew deployed to Palau by the U.S. Coast Guard 14th District. The U.S. Embassy in Koror coordinated the request from the government of Palau.

“It was fantastic to have members of the Republic of Palau’s maritime law enforcement team aboard the aircraft, who’ve

previously sailed with us on our Fast Response Cutters and participated in Operation Irensia in Guam earlier this year,” said Wallin. “The participation underscores the deep and enduring ties between our teams, demonstrating the strength of our partnership and our shared commitment to protecting Palau’s waters and the wider Blue Pacific.”

Operational Highlights

– U.S. Coast Guard Assets and Personnel Involved:

- 03 U.S. Coast Guard liaison officers and specialists
- Aircraft and aircrew from U.S. Coast Guard Hercules from Oahu, Hawai’i

– Enacted Agreement:

- Exercising the U.S. and Palau agreement to suppress illicit transnational maritime activity in and around Palau’s EEZ and territorial waters.

– Results:

- Approximately 50 hours of JOC watchstanding to coordinate and analyze maritime domain awareness efforts.
- Hercules aircrew patrolled approximately 2,000 miles daily.
- Hercules aircrew patrolled nearby high seas and verified 12 vessels and additional radar signatures of FADs along the Palau EEZ.

One of the Palauan air riders described the operation as an unforgettable experience, praising the smooth flight, the professionalism of the aircrew, and the lasting memories made during the mission. The reports gathered during these operations will guide future efforts by Palauan and U.S. Coast Guard surface asset crews to locate, dismantle, and deter illegal fishing operations. This collaborative mission emphasizes the importance of aerial surveillance and the enduring U.S.-Palau partnership in safeguarding sovereignty and promoting good governance across the Blue Pacific.

“The U.S. Coast Guard is proud to work alongside the Republic of Palau in this vital effort. The value of aerial support cannot be overstated, and together, we are strengthening maritime governance to ensure a secure and prosperous future for the Pacific. Our enduring partnership reflects our mutual dedication to protecting these vital waters from exploitation,”

said Capt. Robert Kistner, commander of U.S. Coast Guard Forces Micronesia.

The U.S. Coast Guard remains dedicated to supporting Palau’s maritime security through continued aerial, surface, and information-sharing operations, fostering a secure maritime environment for all who rely on the region’s resources.