

U.S., Federated States of Micronesia Sign Expanded Shiprider Agreement



U.S. Coast Guard Forces Micronesia Sector Guam Commander Capt. Nicholas R. Simmons and the Honorable Joses R. Gallen, Secretary of Justice, Federated States of Micronesia, signed an expanded shiprider agreement allowing remote coordination of authorities, the first of its kind aboard the USCGC Myrtle Hazard (WPC 1139) in Guam, on Oct. 13, 2022. *U.S. COAST GUARD / Chief Warrant Officer Sara Muir*

SANTA RITA, Guam – To overcome complex challenges to maritime enforcement in the Federated States of Micronesia (FSM), a nation with over six hundred islands, representatives of the United States and the FSM signed a remote shiprider agreement on Oct. 13, 2022, during a Joint Committee Meeting hosted by Joint Region Marianas.

Through remote coordination, this agreement, the first of its kind, will enable the U.S. to act on behalf of the country to

combat illicit maritime activity when an FSM law enforcement officer is not present. More specifically, the agreement provides a coordinating mechanism and process for U.S. law enforcement personnel to work with the FSM National Police through command centers to receive approval from the FSM to act.

Shiprider agreements allow maritime law enforcement officers to observe, board and search vessels suspected of violating laws or regulations within a designated exclusive economic zone (EEZ) or on the high seas. These law enforcement activities bolster maritime law enforcement operations and maritime domain awareness and provide a mechanism to conduct integrated operations within the Pacific.

“We’re thrilled to cooperate with our Federated States of Micronesia partners on this initiative that will reap benefits for FSM’s economic, environmental and national security in the maritime domain,” said Alissa Bibb, chargé d’affaires at the U.S. Embassy in Kolonia.

The dynamic nature of detecting, deterring and suppressing illegal activity in the Pacific, like fisheries offenses and illicit maritime drug trafficking, requires creative and collaborative solutions. This agreement builds on the enduring partnership and long-standing shiprider agreement between the two nations by providing a new framework to conduct maritime operations and relies on the professionalism and expertise of U.S. and FSM maritime law enforcement officers.

The U.S. Coast Guard regularly exercises 13 bilateral fisheries law enforcement agreements with countries throughout the Pacific islands. These agreements enable U.S. Coast Guard personnel and U. S. Navy vessels with embarked U.S. Coast Guard law enforcement personnel to work with host nations to protect critical regional resources. Shiprider efforts greatly enhance host-nation sovereignty by enabling Pacific Island Nation partners to enforce their laws and regulations using

U.S. assets.

The U.S. Coast Guard maintains strong partnerships with the maritime forces in the region through extensive training and subject matter expert exchanges. FSM, also known as the Big Ocean State, has one of the world's largest EEZs, with waters rich in sea life. FSM consists of four states – Pohnpei, Chuuk, Yap and Kosrae – each with a mix of unique peoples, languages and cultures. FSM is a signatory to a Compact of Free Association with the United States. They are also a Pacific Islands Forum Fisheries Association member and a party to the South Pacific Tuna Treaty.

“This historic agreement significantly strengthens presence and enforcement options to counter illicit maritime activity in the region. It is only made possible by the deep and abiding relationships and respect between the Coast Guard and our FSM partners,” said Capt. Nick Simmons, commander of U.S. Coast Guard Forces Micronesia. “FSM has the 14th largest EEZ in the world and only two patrol boats. Our crews spend ample time within the region but getting a shiprider aboard our vessels can be a real logistical challenge. This agreement dramatically increases the capacity of available resources to act on FSM's behalf to protect their living marine resources and sovereignty. We appreciate their continued trust and confidence as we work together.”

The USCGC Oliver Henry (WPC 1140) hosted Chargé d'affaires Bibb and her team aboard in Pohnpei in September. They met with several key officials, and members of the cutter's engineering team conducted a subject matter exchange with the crew of FSS Palikir, the last active Pacific-class patrol boat, on shipboard repairs and assisting with preventative maintenance.

In May, USCGC Myrtle Hazard (WPC 1139) made a contactless crew rest and re-fueling stop in FSM during their expeditionary patrol across Oceania. In December 2021, USCGC Sequoia (WLB

215), working alongside the Navy's Underwater Construction Team Two (UCT-2), conducted operations to widen the channel at Kapingamarangi Atoll. U.S. Coast Guard Forces Micronesia/Sector Guam also provides search and rescue support to FSM, with several successful cases in the last year, resulting in ten lives saved.

The shiprider program supports regional coordination and aligns with the National Security Strategy, U.S. Indo-Pacific Command efforts, and the U.S. Coast Guard's Operation Blue Pacific. The bilateral agreements enacted in the Pacific are the bedrock of regional maritime law enforcement partnership. They convey the United States' ongoing investment in protecting shared resources and interest in maritime safety and security, including fair and reciprocal trade, while standing against a current of aggressive and coercive influence in the region.

The U.S. is devoted to ensuring greater unity and a free and open Indo-Pacific for all nations who observe the rule of law. The U.S. Coast Guard continues to demonstrate our enduring presence in the Pacific and help facilitate increased regional stability, security and resilience for U.S. partners.