

Arrests, court orders, and confusion: Chuuk's election crisis deepens

By **Bill Jaynes**
The Kaselehlie Press

April 1, 2025

Chuuk—Yesterday afternoon, a Chuuk State special justice granted a temporary restraining order barring a re-vote at Weno polling places that was scheduled to start today. In the morning, Chief Justice Jason Robert and Associate Justice Eram recused themselves from hearing the matter, citing conflicts of interest. Special Justice Tavita Muloilangi then heard the motions and ruled to halt today's re-vote pending a decision by a full appellate panel.

Yesterday, Takamichy Mori, Acting Executive Director of the Chuuk State Election Commission, posted a notice stating that ballots would be filled at

3 p.m. at the Weno Municipal Office. It also notified candidates that they could send poll watchers to observe the process no later than that time. However, the election was later canceled.

The situation in Chuuk regarding the election has been difficult to follow, as various supposedly official entities continue to make conflicting announcements about the re-vote, only to have other supposedly official entities overturn them. Despite ongoing court cases and complaints regarding the election, Governor Narruhn previously announced plans to hold an inauguration on April 15. The "old" commission—confirmed by the Chuuk Senate—ordered a re-vote of Weno polling places based on alleged ballot irregularities. Weno's mayor also informed residents that

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President Simina and U.S. Secretary of Defense Hegseth hold first high-level bilateral under new U.S. administration - Yap infrastructure projects advance

FSM Information Services

March 27, 2025

Guam—His Excellency President Wesley W. Simina of the Federated States of Micronesia (FSM) met with U.S. Secretary of Defense Pete Hegseth on March 27, 2025 at Andersen Air Force Base in Guam, marking the first high-level bilateral engagement between the FSM and the United States under the new U.S. Administration. The meeting

reaffirmed the enduring partnership between the two nations under the Compact of Free Association and set the tone for continued strategic cooperation in the Indo-Pacific.

In a Joint Statement by the U.S. Department of Defense and the FSM, the meeting resulted in a mutual understanding enabling the U.S. Department of Defense (DoD)

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FSM Public Auditor calls for stronger safeguards in cash collection

By **Bill Jaynes**
The Kaselehlie Press

March 26, 2025

Chuuk—Following a request from a previous Acting Secretary of the Department of Finance and Administration to conduct surprise cash count audits at the Division of Treasury, including all field offices in the FSM states, the FSM Office of the National Public Auditor (ONPA) released an audit of FSM field offices in Chuuk. Each of the other FSM state field offices will also undergo surprise cash counts. ONPA has already conducted a surprise cash count in Pohnpei State. The audit contained three findings for improvement in cash collection processes.

Though the initial engagement review originally focused on the Division of Treasury, the review has been extended to include the Division of Customs, Tax, and Administration (CTA), Quarantine at the Division of Agriculture, the Department of Resources and Development, and FSM Postal Services (CTA Post Office) field offices.

As part of the surprise cash count in Chuuk, auditors found that there were

insufficient safeguards in the Customs and Tax revenue collection. They also found that weaknesses in collection mechanisms limit potential revenue growth for CTA and Quarantine facilities. Lastly, they found that inadequate separation of duties poses the risk of errors and fraud.

To be clear, ONPA did not uncover any specific errors or fraud in their audit. The audit made no allegations of wrongdoing but did state that improvements could be made in cash collections to avoid the possibility of such issues in the future.

Regarding the first finding concerning CTA, auditors discovered that the commonly used storage for securing cash collections is a zippered bag. Each CTA officer has their own bag, which they carry with them throughout the day. At the end of the day, all collections are consolidated and stored in a small secure safe in the office of the Field Manager.

Auditors said this practice could easily lead to loss, particularly as officers move between locations. The zippered bags offer minimal security, lacking features such as tamper-evident seals or dual control,

which would prevent unauthorized access or alteration of cash amounts before formal processing. Lastly, the process of combining the bags at the end of the day is "time-consuming and inefficient."

At the CTA Post Office site, the audit team noted a lack of secure storage for collections. Officers carry the collected funds in a bag whenever leaving the workstation, such as when going out for lunch or assisting customers at the gate. This procedure, again, increases the risk of misplacing or losing track of funds.

Additionally, auditors noted the absence of an Electronic Funds Transfer at Point of Sale (EFTPOS) system, which would allow customers to pay with a debit or credit card. ONPA stated that EFTPOS offers several advantages, including eliminating the need to handle cash. Such a system also automatically generates transaction records, making bookkeeping easier.

ONPA found that weaknesses in collection mechanisms limit potential revenue growth for CTA and Quarantine facilities. At the CTA airport field office, which is the main

entry point for incoming items such as parcels, the scanning machine does not work. ONPA concluded that the absence of a functional scanning machine at a key entry point can severely impact tax revenue, as scanners are essential for accurately identifying the contents, values, and quantities of incoming goods.

Auditors found that while there is a Quarantine field office at Chuuk airport to assist passengers who need to declare local produce they want to take with them, the office is not easy for passengers to find. They also noted that officers are frequently difficult to locate or arrive late to their posts. ONPA concluded that Quarantine could be missing out on opportunities to collect revenue due under the law when customers, unable to find a Quarantine officer, simply carry their produce without inspection.

FSM R&D stated that its Quarantine office location has been limited to the space assigned by the Chuuk State Government, which has been the baggage arrival area. However, since the exit interview, they have placed signs in the departures area that clearly point the way to the office. They have also begun cracking down on officer tardiness.

Lastly, ONPA found that duty segregation should be strengthened. During their visits to the CTA Post Office between September 16-18, they observed that only one officer was responsible for all operations, including customer assistance, package release, and tax collection. At the CTA field office, multiple officers are responsible for collecting and retaining funds throughout the day, with cash counts conducted at day's end for processing and deposit. Through samples of daily cash count records, ONPA found that the same individual who prepared the document was also responsible for counting the collections.

"Without adequate segregation of duties, employees may have unchecked control over critical processes, increasing the likelihood of fraud or theft," the auditors stated. "Lack of role separation can lead to errors going undetected, resulting in inaccurate financial reporting, misstatements, or undetected data entry mistakes."

Though the audit contained a response from FSM Resources and Development regarding Quarantine, there was no response from CTA.



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P.O. Box 2222 Pohnpei, FM 96941
phone: (691) 320-6547
email: Kpress@mail.fm

Bill Jaynes
Managing Editor

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Monday, April 14, 2025**

President Simina concludes official working visit to Japan, discusses key priorities with Prime Minister Ishiba

FSM Information Services

March 24, 2025

TOKYO, Japan—His Excellency Wesley W. Simina, President of the Federated States of Micronesia (FSM), successfully concluded an official working visit to Japan from

March 14 to 20, 2025, during which he met with Prime Minister Ishiba and key Japanese leaders, deepening the strong partnership between the two nations.

At the heart of the visit was a high-level bilateral meeting and working dinner with the Prime Minister of Japan, His Excellency Shigeru Ishiba. The two leaders discussed shared priorities including infrastructure development, regional security, maritime cooperation, and people-centered development. President Simina congratulated Prime Minister Ishiba on his appointment and reaffirmed FSM’s support for Japan’s leadership in regional and global affairs, including its aspiration for a permanent seat on the United Nations Security Council.

“Our nations share a profound ‘KIZUNA’ – a special bond nurtured through history, mutual respect, and shared values,” said President Simina. “I look forward to deepening our collaboration in support of peace, stability, and sustainable development across the Pacific.”

A highlight of the working dinner was the exchange of notes for a cable landing station project which aims to strengthen the FSM’s digital communications by adding to the cable system through connecting a new subsea cable

to Chuuk State.

Representing the FSM, Secretary of Foreign Affairs Lorin S. Robert signed the Exchange of Notes, while Japan was represented by His Excellency Ambassador Nobuo Kagomiya. The ceremonial exchange took place during the bilateral dinner at the Prime Minister’s Office in the presence of President Simina and Prime Minister Ishiba.

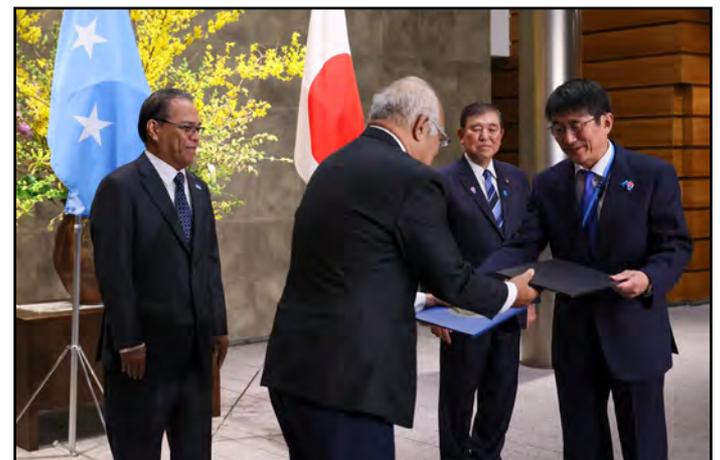
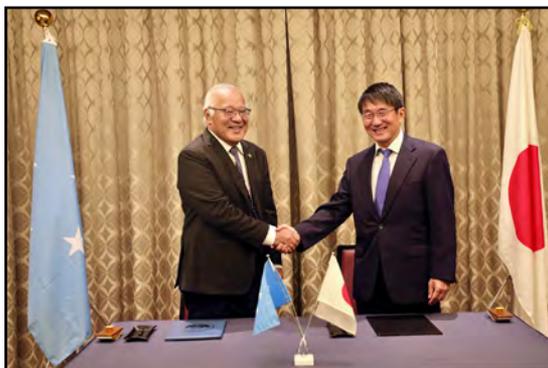
The President also met with other key figures, including Chairman Yohei Sasakawa of the Nippon Foundation, President Toshiro Shirasu of the Overseas Fishery Cooperation Foundation (OFCF), and members of the FSM-Japan Parliamentary Friendship League led by Hon. Keiji Furuya. These engagements underscored the FSM’s commitment to strengthening cooperation in maritime security, fisheries, education, and people-to-people exchange.

A major highlight of the visit was the President’s tour of the Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Power Plant, which provided firsthand insight into the decommissioning process and safety protocols surrounding the ALPS-treated water discharge. The visit also included engagements with local leaders and residents in Namie Town and a courtesy call on the Governor of Fukushima Prefecture.

“The visit to Fukushima underscores the FSM’s deep trust in the Government of Japan,” said President Simina. “We remain confident in Japan’s ability to manage the ALPS-treated water responsibly and transparently and in close cooperation with the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA).”

Throughout the visit, President Simina expressed his appreciation for Japan’s continued development assistance to the FSM, including ongoing projects such as the Pohnpei State Port Expansion and grassroots technical cooperation programs supported by JICA and other Japanese institutions.

President Simina’s visit to Japan marks a new chapter in the FSM-Japan relationship, which has been characterized by over a century of historical and cultural ties and more than three decades of formal diplomatic relations. The visit also builds on commitments made at the 10th Pacific Islands Leaders Meeting (PALM10) and sets the tone for enhanced collaboration ahead of Expo 2025 in Osaka, where the FSM will be proudly participating.



Pacific Island auditors trained on performance audit practice areas

PASAI

March 24, 2025

Auckland, New Zealand: The Pacific Association of Supreme Audit Institutions (PASAI) is delivering a second series of 10 webinars covering performance audit practice areas for its members from today.

41 staff (24 female and 17 male) from the government audit offices of American Samoa, the Federated States of Micronesia (FSM) National office, FSM Kosrae, Fiji, Guam, Tonga, Vanuatu, FSM Yap, FSM Chuuk, Palau, Solomon Islands and Papua New Guinea participated in the remotely accessible capacity building training.

PASAI Program Director, Mike Scott, is keen to build on the first webinar series he delivered from February 2024 that covered the fundamentals of auditing the performance of government service provision.

“During each webinar, I will talk to a panel of guest practitioners from different international audit offices, opening the conversation to questions and comments from the webinar audience,” he said.

The first webinar will cover project management of an audit with guest panellists from the Office of the

Auditor-General of New Zealand. The remaining webinars, held once every 2 months, will cover concepts ranging from evidence collection to risk management and report writing.

The training model responds to the expressed desires of Pacific Island auditors to learn directly from those in the same field.

Mr Scott explained, “The webinars feature practitioners sharing what they have found has worked in successfully delivering impactful performance audits, challenges they have encountered and how they have overcome them, and pitfalls to avoid, giving examples from audits that they have worked on.”

PASAI will make a recording of each webinar available to participants on its online Learning Platform which also includes a forum for participants to share their reflections and experiences.

Additionally, the first series of webinars will soon be available to Pacific Island performance auditors as a self-paced online learning package that includes practice sheets and quizzes to complete.

PASAI acknowledges the support of the New Zealand Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade (MFAT) and the Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT).

defense cooperation. “The principals committed to continuing to work closely together as projects advance.” the two governments affirmed in the joint statement.

President Simina emphasized that the Yap Four Pillars— Environment, Safety, Maintenance and Social aspects—remain priority in the implementation of all DoD activities in Yap. “The leadership and values of Yap State are guiding this process,” said President Simina. “The Four Pillars ensure that this cooperation is not only strategic, but also deeply rooted in local values and long-term benefit for our communities.”

...Chuuk Election

Continued from front page

the re-vote would proceed. However, Chuuk’s Acting Attorney General issued a notice stating that the re-vote would not take place and warned that anyone preparing for it would “face legal consequences.”

And “face legal consequences” they have—along with others who were not involved in any way. Chuuk State police arrested all members of the “old” commission along with their attorney, allegedly without a warrant. They also arrested a Filipino employee of the printing company that had been commissioned to print the election ballots.

One of the most publicized arrests was that of a Filipina receptionist at Truk Stop Hotel, captured on the hotel’s surveillance camera. The receptionist followed the hotel’s policy of not disclosing guest information when Oncher Walter, Johnny Meippen, and Cornelio Refalopei—Deputy Director of Public Safety, recently appointed by the Governor—asked about the whereabouts of Sabino Asor, the attorney for the Chuuk Senate. When she informed them that Asor had left, the video, widely circulated on social media, showed the officers growing frustrated with her answers before finally arresting her.

All those arrested were released before the 24-hour time period before which police are required to file charges had passed. Without charges, they were legally required to releases the

detainees.

Additional arrests were allegedly made in connection with the planned re-vote, but we were unable to obtain further information on them.

Many people in Chuuk have expressed fear and disappointment in their government.

“Civil unrest in Chuuk. Abuse of power. Unlawful arrests. Violation of rights. This s*** show started from the election. To be clear, I take no sides in the election,” one Weno resident wrote on social media, pleading for action from FSM national government officials.

“FSM national government officials, the people of Chuuk are being terrorized. State and municipal police are going against each other. Who will protect the people? Chuuk leaders are not calling a state of emergency when they should.

“It’s a sad day for me to feel scared in my own home and island. Cars are speeding up and down the road. There is no justice system to protect the people. Have we really come to this? Innocent people are caught between the egos and pride of our leaders. When is it too much? When is enough, enough?!!” she wrote.

Until a Chuuk appellate panel hears arguments regarding a previous ruling that declared the “new commission” as the authorized election body—despite its members not being approved by the Senate—further election resolution appears to be on hold.

...Bilateral

Continued from front page

to begin planning and construction on key infrastructure projects in the State of Yap. This milestone follows several years of close coordination and reflects both nations’ shared commitment to strengthening regional security and local development.

These Yap-based projects—expected to exceed \$2 billion in future U.S. investments—will provide strategic operational and exercise capabilities for U.S. forces and serve as a cornerstone of renewed

President Simina also reaffirmed the FSM’s strong support for continued U.S. military cooperation, including the impactful work of the U.S. Navy Seabees, and upcoming Pacific Partnership 2025 and Koa Moana 2025 deployments.

President Simina also addressed several other national priorities with Secretary Hegseth, including:

- The continuation and extension of the 333 Program to strengthen FSM law enforcement and maritime security.
- Reinstatement of Civil Action Team (CAT) Camps to support community infrastructure.

- Support for FSM veterans, including efforts to establish a framework agreement to improve access to health services and benefits.

- Environmental concerns related to WWII-era shipwreck oil removal in Chuuk Lagoon.

- Infrastructure priorities highlighted at the Joint Committee Meeting (JCM), including maritime safety projects in Pohnpei and Kosrae.

The meeting, held early in the new U.S. Administration, signals strong continuity and momentum in the U.S.-FSM relationship. President Simina reaffirmed the FSM’s commitment to the Compact and to its enduring partnership with the United States.

Australia Awards Alumni share experiences at COM-FSM event

By **Bill Jaynes**
The Kaselehlie Press

March 21, 2025
Pohnpei—

The Australian Embassy in the Federated States of Micronesia hosted an information session on the Australia Awards Scholarships at the College of Micronesia-FSM (COM-FSM) this week. The session, led by Australian Ambassador to FSM Jenny Grant-Curnow and her team, introduced students to two prestigious scholarship opportunities offered by the Australian Government:

- Australia Awards Scholarship (AAS)
- Australia Awards Pacific Scholarship (AAPS)

These scholarships provide FSM students the opportunity to study at select institutions in Australia and across the Pacific, equipping them with knowledge and skills to contribute to their home country's development.



Five FSM professionals who previously studied under the Australia Awards program joined the session to share their experiences:

- Ms. Danally Danielle – Directing Attorney, Micronesian Legal Services
- Mr. Rothgery Lopez – Early Hearing Detection and Intervention Follow-up Coordinator, FSM Dept. of Health and Social Affairs
- Mr. Ben Jackson Amor Jr. – Program Manager for Environmental Health, FSM Dept. of Health and Social Affairs
- Ms. Anjannet Pretrick – Administrative Assistant, FSM Dept. of Health and Social Affairs
- Mr. Kiyoshi Phillip – Chairman for Agriculture, College of Micronesia-FSM

Ambassador Grant-Curnow expressed appreciation for COM-FSM's support in encouraging students to pursue higher education.



Applications for the Australia Awards Scholarships are now open and will close on April 30, 2025, at 11:59 PM AEST. More information is available at fsm.embassy.gov.au/phpi/study.htm.

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Vice President Palik and Second Lady Palik join COFA Day celebrations and hold Town Hall with FSM citizens in Texas

FSM Information Services

March 24, 2025

Austin & Killeen, Texas—The Honorable Aren B. Palik, Vice President of the Federated States of Micronesia (FSM), accompanied by Madam Second Lady Adelita A. Palik, recently concluded a successful series of engagements with citizens of the Freely Associated States (FAS) residing in Texas, commemorating COFA Day and hosting a town hall with FSM citizens.

The visit began in Austin, where Vice President Palik and Madam Second Lady joined leaders and members of the COFA Alliance National Network (CANN)—a grassroots organization advocating for the rights and welfare of COFA citizens across the United States. The Vice President met with representatives from the national chapter as well as state chapters from Arkansas, Washington, and Texas. The discussions centered on the challenges and achievements of COFA citizens and CANN's expanding role in helping families navigate access to state and federal services.

Following the meeting, Vice President Palik paid courtesy visits to the offices of Representative Brad Buckley and Senator Nathan Johnson, authors and sponsors of a legislative resolution recognizing March 18 as COFA Day in Texas. This milestone acknowledges the important contributions of the COFA community to the state and celebrates the unique and enduring ties between the United States and the Freely Associated States—namely the FSM, the Republic of the Marshall Islands (RMI), and the Republic of Palau (ROP).

On March 18, Vice President Palik and Madam Second Lady Palik were formally recognized on the floors of both chambers of the Texas Legislature during a ceremonial session. The adoption of House Resolution 559 (HR 559) and Senate Resolution 268 (SR 268) officially established March 18 as COFA Day in Texas. Joining the Vice President for the recognition were Senator David Anitok (RMI), H.E. Ambassador Hersey Kyota (Palau), H.E. Ambassador Jackson Soram (FSM), Acting Consul General Dominic Maluchmai, and Mr. Francis

Sakate, President of CANN-Texas.

Following the legislative ceremony, Vice President Palik delivered remarks at a celebration held in the Capitol Rotunda, commending the COFA citizens for their continued contributions to their local communities and encouraging them to carry on as ambassadors of their respective island nations. He highlighted the unique relationship that the COFA nations share with the United States under the Compact of Free Association, emphasizing the mutual benefits of this enduring partnership.

The celebration concluded with cultural performances by the COFA community, showcasing the traditions and pride of their island heritage.

The Vice President's visit continued in Killeen, Texas, on March 19, where he hosted a Town Hall meeting with FSM citizens, organized in collaboration with CANN-Texas Chapter and the Kosrae State Central Texas Association (CENTEX). The Vice President was warmly received by community leaders and families, as well as the Honorable Michael Blomquist, Mayor of Harker Heights, and Chief of Police Betiale L. Hawkings II.

In his remarks, Vice President Palik shared updates on the priorities of the Simina-Palik Administration, underscoring the importance of unity, progress, and citizen engagement both at home and abroad. He spoke of the enduring significance of the Compact of Free Association and encouraged FSM citizens to continue pursuing opportunities in the United States while also considering how they might contribute to nation-building efforts back home.

The Town Hall included an open dialogue where Vice President Palik and his delegation responded to questions on a wide range of topics including social security, passport services, health care, scholarships, job opportunities, and the potential establishment of polling locations on the U.S. mainland. Citizens were provided with useful guidance on accessing public services and official government information online.

The evening concluded in a spirit of celebration and community, with sharing meals and cultural entertainment provided by the FSM citizens of Killeen.

The Vice President's engagements in Texas reflect the FSM Government's continued commitment to strengthening

its relationship with its diaspora communities and supporting citizens abroad through outreach, transparency, and dialogue.





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COM-FSM and the UOG Inks 2+2 Transfer Pathway for Agriculture Students

The President of the University of Guam, Dr. Anita Borja Enriquez, and the President of the College of Micronesia-FSM, Dr. Theresa Koroivulaono, along with select staff members, signed a Memorandum of Agreement for a 2+2 transfer pathway. Graduates from the COM-FSM Associate of Science in Agriculture and Natural Resources Management (ANRM) degree will transfer directly into a Bachelor of Science in Agriculture and Life Sciences under the Tropical Agriculture Production track. Where previously the COM-FSM graduates were required to enroll in a 4-year bachelor's program, the MOA reduces study time considerably by two years, hence the 2+2 agreement. Following months of negotiation, the signing heralded a proactive, positive, and celebrated pathway of access and

opportunity. This partnership not only strengthens collaboration between the two institutions but also paves the way for the following transformative initiatives:

Streamlining Education: Creating a clear pathway for COM-FSM agriculture graduates to transition seamlessly into 4-year and graduate programs at UOG.

Promoting Distance Learning: Expanding access to higher education, by enabling students across Micronesia and the wider Pacific to pursue their dreams without geographical barriers.

Celebrating Culture and Unity: Reinforcing cultural pride and regional solidarity within the Micronesian region and the broader Pacific community.

Protecting Our Environment:



From R-L: UOG Interim Associate Dean, Dr. Maika V. Vuki, Snr. Vice-President of UOG, Dr. Sharleen Santos-Bambas, UOG President, Dr. Anita Borja Enriquez, COM-FSM President, Dr. Theresa Koroivulaono and COM-FSM Vice-President of Cooperate Research & Extension, Mr. Steven Young-Uhk

Highlighting the importance of safeguarding fragile ecosystems and championing smart recycling practices and contributing to a safer, more sustainable, and prosperous environment for future generations. By eliminating barriers, empowering students, championing shared values,

and promoting environmental stewardship, this partnership underscores a shared vision of serving the higher education needs of the FSM and Guam. Together, we honor our cultures, protect our natural resources, and build resilient systems for the region.

National Campus
P.O. Box 159
Kolonia Pohnpei, FM 96941
Phone: (691)320-2480
Fax: (691)320-2479
E-Mail: national@comfsm.fm

Chuuk Campus
P.O. Box 879
Chuuk, FM 96942
Phone: (691)330-2689
Fax: (691)330-2740
E-Mail: chuuk@comfsm.fm

FSM-FMI
P.O. Box 1056
Colonia Yap, FM 96943
Phone: (691)350-5244
Fax: (691)350-5245
E-Mail: fmi@comfsm.fm

Kosrae Campus
P.O. Box 37
Tofol Kosrae, FM 96944
Phone: (691)370-3191
Fax: (691)370-3193
E-Mail: kosrae@comfsm.fm

CTEC Campus
P.O. Box 614
Kolonia Pohnpei, FM 96941
Phone: (691)320-3795
Fax: (691)320-3799
E-Mail: pohnpei@comfsm.fm

Yap Campus
P.O. Box 286
Colonia Yap, FM 96943
Phone: (691)350-2296/5149
Fax: (691)350-5150
E-Mail: yap@comfsm.fm

Mrs. ISHIBA Yoshiko, Spouse of the Prime Minister of Japan and Mrs. Ancelly SIMINA, First Lady of the FSM meet in Japan

Embassy of Japan to the FSM

March 26, 2025

Tokyo, Japan—On March 18, 2025, commencing at 12:00 for approximately 2 hours, Mrs. ISHIBA Yoshiko, spouse of the Prime Minister of Japan, held a meeting with Mrs. Ancelly SIMINA, First Lady of the Federated States of Micronesia (FSM), who is currently paying an official working visit to Japan. The overview of the meeting is as follows.

Mrs. Ishiba welcomed the visit of Mrs. Simina to Japan and expressed her hope that the visit by President Simina and Mrs. Simina would serve as an opportunity to further deepen and cherish the “kizuna”

(bond of trust) between the two countries. Mrs. Simina expressed her gratitude for Mrs. Ishiba’s hospitality.

They received a briefing about the techniques for handling fresh fish and the development of sushi culture in Japan, followed by a demonstration of Japanese cuisine. They also enjoyed an Ikebana workshop, the traditional Japanese art of flower arrangement, under the guidance of instructors from the Ikebana International Tokyo Founding Chapter, an organization dedicated to promoting mutual understanding through Ikebana, after first attending a briefing on its historical and cultural background.

While savoring Japanese tea, they exchanged views on a variety of topics, including the cultural and historical links between Japan and the FSM, food culture, women's empowerment and other subjects.

The two spouses were joined by Mrs. KAGOMIYA Kumiko, spouse of the Ambassador of Japan to the FSM, and Mrs. Momoe Fritz, spouse of the Ambassador of the FSM to Japan.



Kosrae strengthens commitment to gender equality through community training

FSM Central Implementation Unit

March 18, 2025

Kosrae, FSM—Important strides toward promoting gender equality and raising community awareness were achieved in Kosrae through targeted gender awareness training sessions held this March. These sessions, part of the broader World Bank-funded Gender Equity Program, aim to foster understanding and enhance community safety and inclusion across Micronesia’s transport sector.

The World Bank’s Gender Equity Program has prioritized addressing unique cultural and structural barriers to gender equality in FSM. Recognizing traditional roles and societal expectations, the program aims to create a respectful and inclusive dialogue to empower both women and men and improve public safety for all.

On March 11th and 12th, two dynamic training sessions were held at the Kosrae Public Library, specifically designed for members of the Gender and Social Support Program (GSSP) and personnel from the Department of Public Safety, particularly DMV staff. These sessions addressed critical topics including gender equality, gender-based violence (GBV), sexual

exploitation and abuse (SEA), and sexual harassment (SH).

Opening the GSSP session, Project Officer Ms. Sonia Kephass warmly welcomed the participants, stating, “This training is more than just information; it’s an important step toward creating safer, inclusive communities in Kosrae.”

Facilitated by gender expert Dr. Joyce Das, the interactive sessions engaged participants through discussions and practical exercises addressing gender roles, myths surrounding gender equality, and essential methods for effectively responding to GBV and SEA/SH cases. Reflecting on the session’s impact, Dr. Das noted, “The participants showed incredible openness and eagerness to learn. It was inspiring to see their commitment to addressing gender issues proactively within their community.”

Feedback from GSSP participants highlighted the transformative nature of the training. One participant shared, “Understanding the difference between gender equality and equity was truly eye-opening. It has changed how I see my role in the community.”

The training session with the Department of Public Safety focused



on breaking down gender misconceptions and establishing practical ways to incorporate gender-sensitive practices into daily operations. Participants expressed a newfound clarity, with one officer noting, “This training has given me the knowledge to recognize and address gender-based issues more confidently in my work.”

Recognizing the absence of established SEA/SH response mechanisms in Kosrae, participants expressed the need for developing local referral pathways to enhance community safety and support for survivors.

The successful training sessions in Kosrae represent meaningful progress towards gender equality, setting the foundation for continued dialogue and community improvement. Following this impactful initiative, similar training events are planned for Chuuk and Yap, further advancing the mission of gender equity across FSM.

For more information about the Gender Equity Program and future training



opportunities, please contact:

Ms. Sonia Kephass
Gender Transport Project Manager
sonia.kephas@tci.gov.fm



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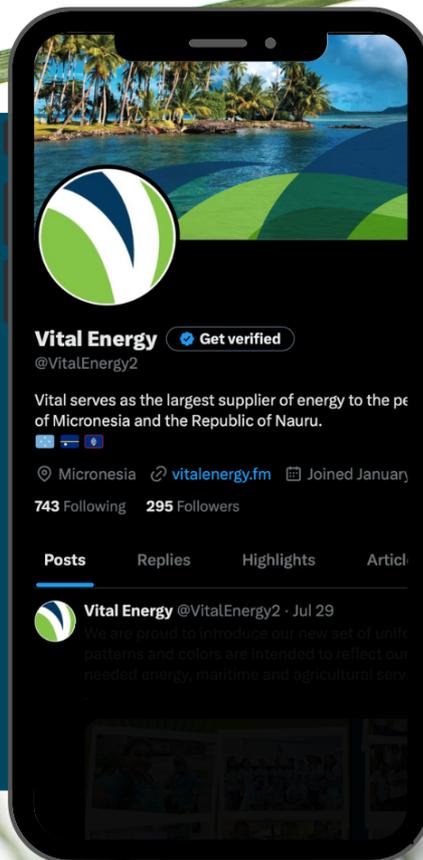
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Pohnpei takes bold steps for gender equality in transport sector

FSM Central Implementation Unit

March 10, 2025

Pohnpei, FSM—Significant steps toward gender equality and community empowerment were achieved this March through innovative gender awareness training sessions conducted in Pohnpei. These sessions form part of the World Bank-funded Gender Equity Program, designed to foster understanding and create safer, inclusive communities across Micronesia's transport sector.

The World Bank's Gender Equity Program is strengthening gender awareness across the Federated States of Micronesia's transport sector. FSM, like many Pacific Island nations, faces cultural and structural barriers to gender equality. Traditional roles influence how women and men access resources, participate in public life, and experience personal safety. This initiative aims to bridge these gaps by fostering inclusive dialogue while respecting local traditions.

The primary objectives of this training program were to:

- Build essential awareness and capacity among key stakeholders regarding gender equality concepts
- Strengthen understanding of Gender-Based Violence (GBV), Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (SEA), and Sexual Harassment (SH)
- Establish clear response and referral mechanisms



for addressing gender-related concerns

- Create an enabling environment for ongoing dialogue about gender equality

The training targeted two primary groups: members of the Gender and Social Support Program (GSSP) and personnel from the Department of Public Safety, particularly those working in DMVs (Department of Motor Vehicles). This strategic approach recognized that sustainable change requires engaging both civil society organizations dedicated to gender equality and public institutions responsible for service delivery and safety.

The consulting team employed a learner-centered approach, designing curriculum and materials specifically adapted to the local context and participant needs. Through collaborative planning with local stakeholders, including the Pohnpei Women's Council, the training program was structured to maximize relevance, participation, and practical application.

Over the course of two impactful events held on March 5th and 6th, members of the Gender and Social Support Program (GSSP) and the Department of Public Safety (DMV) gathered to engage deeply with critical issues such as gender equality, gender-based violence (GBV), sexual exploitation and abuse (SEA), and sexual harassment (SH).

Opening the GSSP training session at the Pohnpei State Governor's Conference Room, Ms. Emeliana Musrasrik-Carl, President of the Pohnpei Women's Council, highlighted the significance of the gathering: "Gender equality is essential for the progress of our society. Today's training is an opportunity for meaningful dialogue that can bring lasting change."

Under the overall supervision of the Project Manager, Sonia Kephas and facilitated by gender expert Dr. Joyce Das from GoEqual and Adaia Solé from CH Consulting, the interactive sessions enabled participants to explore complex issues, including understanding gender roles, debunking myths about gender equality, and learning about practical approaches to address GBV and SEA/SH cases effectively. Reflecting on her experience, Dr. Das shared, "What struck me profoundly was the hunger for knowledge and participants' openness to discuss topics previously considered too sensitive or culturally difficult. These trainings are transformational, creating the first-ever safe spaces for essential conversations on gender in Pohnpei."

Participant feedback from the GSSP training was overwhelmingly positive, noting significant personal and professional growth. One participant emphasized, "I learned so much about responding to sexual exploitation and abuse cases. This training provided critical

tools we can use immediately." Another noted the transformative nature of the discussions, sharing, "Today, I understood clearly how victim-blaming can deeply harm survivors. This knowledge helps me support women in my community better."

The second training event targeted personnel from the Department of Public Safety, held at the Public Safety Office. This session addressed gender misconceptions, promoted inclusive policies, and provided clear guidelines on responding to gender-based issues within the community. Reflecting on the session's impact, Dr. Das stated, "Initially, many participants were uncertain about how these topics related to their roles. By the end of the session, they recognized their critical part in promoting community safety and supporting survivors effectively."

Participants expressed their commitment to continued learning, with one Public Safety officer reflecting, "This was eye-opening. I now see clearly how crucial our role is in addressing gender-based issues in our daily work."

Additionally, as part of International Women's Day celebrations on March 8th, consultants and community members came together at the Pohnpei Gymnasium in Kolonia, showcasing solidarity, cultural pride, and commitment to gender equality through vibrant performances and traditional dances.

These training sessions represent foundational steps toward broader social transformation in Pohnpei. They also underscore the importance of establishing stronger cross-sector collaborations and the development of comprehensive response mechanisms for gender-based violence.

Plans are already underway to expand these critical trainings to Chuuk and Yap, aiming to sustain momentum and support ongoing dialogue and education around gender equity across the entire Federated States of Micronesia.

For additional information about the Gender Equity Program or future training initiatives, please contact:

Ms. Sonia Kephas
Gender Transport Project Manager
sonia.kephas@tci.gov.fm



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PACIFIC ISLANDS FORUM

Programme Adviser – Private Sector & Labour Mobility

The Pacific Islands Forum

The Forum (PIF) is an Employer of Choice in the region, aiming to recruit and employ staff based on merit and organisational needs. The Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat (PIFS) ensures that its employment selection upholds its values and commitment to Forum membership, gender balance, and building a diverse and inclusive organisation. PIFS is committed to achieving gender balance and being fully representative of its member countries. Currently the PIFS workforce is over 50% female, with representatives from fifteen of the eighteen Forum member countries.

To achieve greater workforce representation from our member countries we strongly encourage applicants from the following countries to apply: Federated States of Micronesia, French Polynesia, Nauru, Niue, New Caledonia, and Palau

The Opportunity

The Programme Adviser – Private Sector and Labour Mobility role will provide high level analysis and policy advice on the various regionalism priorities, as determined through the Pacific Islands Forum decision making processes, and in support of the 2050 Strategy for the Blue Pacific Continent Implementation Plan (2050 IP). The key responsibilities are summarised as:

- Research & Development
- Technical Advice and Support
- Build strong relationships through Officials-level liaison with Forum Member Countries and other counterparts
- Team Performance & Leadership

Applicants should have an advanced degree (preferably Master level or equivalent) in Development Economics, Trade, Private Sector, Labour, Economics, Governance, International Relations, or a related discipline; with at least eight (8) years of experience with economic policy development, trade and private sector development, labour, and programming and analysis capacity building, especially at the government level.

Candidates with knowledge and understanding of economics, trade, the private sector, labour mobility, and governance, pertaining to Forum Member States, in relation to international and regional economic and trade integration, economic governance, and reform issues, are encouraged to apply.

The Benefits

The position carries a competitive and attractive remuneration and benefits package including medical and life insurance, education, and housing allowance. The position is placed at Band 12 / Adviser level of our salary scale, starting at SDR 45,113 equivalent to FJD 135,800.

Note: Amounts are based on 1 January foreign exchange rates, but the final salary will be dependent on foreign exchange rates at the time of payment.

How to apply

Interested applicants can find out more information on the PIFS website: www.forumsec.org where an information package containing the full responsibilities, selection criteria, and remuneration details, is available.

Candidates must include in either their application or Curriculum Vitae the full contact details of three referees. For non- Fijian nationals, this salary may be tax-free. To be eligible for this position, the applicant must be a national of a Forum member country*. Applicant must be willing to travel periodically via economy class.

Deadline for applications is Friday 18 April 2025.

*Member States of the Pacific Islands Forum: Australia, Cook Islands, the Federated States of Micronesia, Fiji, French Polynesia, Kiribati, Nauru, New Caledonia, New Zealand, Niue, Palau, Papua New Guinea, the Republic of the Marshall Islands, Samoa, the Solomon Islands, Tonga, Tuvalu, and Vanuatu.

Habele Announces Ichiro Robert Memorial Scholarship

Habele

March 31, 2025

Yap—The Ichiro Robert Memorial Scholarship aims to honor the memory of Ichiro Robert, a long-time elementary school educator and Principal of Sapore (Fefan Island, Chuuk) Elementary School.

This scholarship is intended to benefit needy students from Fefan Island.

Ichiro Robert was born on September 23, 1943 in Sapore Village, Fefan, to Istor and Kinara Robert. He graduated from Chuuk High School and obtained a degree from the Community College of Micronesia. He taught at Sapore Elementary School, was later appointed Principal and served there for many years until his retirement. He and his family sponsored a number of Peace Corps Volunteers assigned to Sapore over the years. He retired after his long career. He also served as the Chief of his clan. He died in October 2024.

Habele's K12 tuition scholarships ensure bright, hardworking students have access to the best education possible. Based on need and merit, these scholarships focus on remote outer island, rural village, and female students.

Each Habele tuition grant is set at a level that maintains family ownership in student achievement while lightening the financial burden. Often scholarships cover between 50 and 75 percent of tuition and fees. Students must maintain and report high levels of academic achievement every term, applying each year for continued support.

Attendance at these schools dramatically increases the likelihood children will complete their K-12 education, and advance to success in higher education. Habele awards tuition scholarships because all students, no matter where they live, should have a fair chance to reach their potential.

Memorial Scholarships are a special

type of Habele K12 tuition grant. They honor the legacy of Americans whose life or work demonstrated exceptional commitment to the people of Micronesia, and embodied the best of the longstanding US-Micronesian partnership. These include the Jim Stovall, Hon. Martin Yinug, Lee Huddleston, Dr. Marshall Wees, and Leona Peterson Memorial Scholarships.

The Ichiro Robert Memorial Scholarship was made possible through the support of Sergio Leone, a Returned Peace Corps Volunteer who served in Sapore Elementary School. He and Ichiro became like brothers, maintaining a close friendship through the years.

Habele has been serving students across the FSM with tuition scholarships since 2006. A total of 151 were issued for the 2024-25 school year. Of the students awarded scholarships this year, 90 are from Outer Islands of Yap and Chuuk States, 31 are Yapese, 21 are Pohnpeian, and 8 come from families within Chuuk Lagoon. The 2024-25 cohort consists of 94 females and 57 males. There were 102 scholarships issued to incumbent students, and 49 awarded to new applicants, with more than 150 new, complete on-time applications being received by Habele last year ahead of the June 30th deadline.





- Pohnpei-based position
- Join the principal development organisation in the region

The Pacific Community (SPC) invites applications for the position of **Office Assistant/Messenger** within its Micronesia Regional Office (MRO). This position will be located at its regional office in Pohnpei, Micronesia.

Description

The Pacific Community (SPC) is the principal scientific and technical organisation in the Pacific region, supporting development since 1947. We are an international development organisation owned and governed by our 27 country and territory members. In pursuit of sustainable development to benefit Pacific people, our unique organisation works across more than 25 sectors. We are known for our knowledge and innovation in such areas as fisheries science, public health surveillance, geoscience, and conservation of plant genetic resources for food and agriculture.

The Micronesia Regional Office (MRO) situated in Kolonia, Pohnpei, Federated States of Micronesia (FSM), is the main hub for SPC's projects and partnerships with the Micronesian members of the Federated States of Micronesia, the Republic of the Marshall Islands (RMI), the Republic of Palau, and the United States territories of the Northern Mariana Islands (CNMI), and Guam. The MRO opened in January 2006.

The role – the **Office Assistant/Messenger** will provide receptionist, administrative, and messenger support services to the Micronesia Regional Office.

The key responsibilities of the role include the following:

1. **Office Administration and Reception**
2. **Messenger and Logistics Support**
3. **Meetings, Workshops, and Fleet Management**

For a more detailed account of the key responsibilities, please refer to the online job description.

Qualifications

- Certificate in Administration or Business Administration or equivalent body of knowledge and experience
- Valid driver's license

Technical expertise

- At least 2 years' experience in providing administrative assistance, office assistance or messenger service
- Sound knowledge of MS Work, Excel and Windows computing environment
- Familiar or have working experience dealing with vendors

Language skills

- Written and oral communication skills
- Proficiency in English

Interpersonal skills and cultural awareness

- Ability to work well as part of a team
- Knowledge of Pacific Island countries and territories is an advantage.

Remuneration – The **Office Assistant/Messenger** is a Band 4 position in SPC's 2025 salary scale, with a starting taxable salary range of USD 21,164–26,454 per year, plus local staff benefits. An offer of appointment for an initial contract will be made in the lower half of this range, with due consideration being given to experience and qualifications. Progression within the salary scale will be based on annual performance reviews.

Benefits – SPC provides medical and life insurance for eligible employees. Employees are entitled to 25 days of annual leave. Provident Fund and/or Social Security will be according to FSM's local legislation.

Closing date: 6 April 2025 – 11:00 pm Noumea time

Job Reference: CR000404

Applicants must apply online at <http://careers.spc.int/>

For your application to be considered, you must provide us with:

- an updated resume with contact details for three professional referees
- a cover letter detailing your skills, experience and interest in this position
- responses to all screening questions

Please answer all of the screening questions, if you do not answer these questions your application will be considered incomplete and will not be reviewed at shortlisting stage.

Screening questions:

1. Describe a challenging task you were assigned in the past and how you approached it?
2. Describe a situation where you had to support a large team. Were you successful?
3. Explain how you would handle a situation where you were assigned multiple tasks by different team members?

COM-FSM Radio gets boost with Australian-supported equipment

Bill Jaynes
The Kaselehlie Press

March 24, 2025

Pohnpei—The Australian Embassy in the Federated States of Micronesia has provided new audio equipment to the College of Micronesia-FSM (COM-FSM) radio station, aiming to enhance student-led broadcasting. The donation, supported by ABC International Development and the Pacific Media Assistance Scheme, was officially handed over by Australian Ambassador to FSM Jenny Grant-Curnow.

The initiative seeks to improve sound quality, amplify local voices, and provide students with hands-on learning experiences in media production.

“We’re pleased to support COM-FSM’s commitment to student empowerment through practical broadcasting opportunities,” Ambassador Grant-Curnow said.

The upgraded equipment is expected to strengthen the radio station’s role as a platform for student expression and community engagement.



President Simina visits Fukushima Prefecture, Japan

Embassy of Japan to the FSM

March 26, 2025

Japan—On March 16 to 17, President Simina visited Fukushima Prefecture, Japan, prior to the Japan-FSM Summit Meeting on March 18.

Ambassador Kagomiya as well as the FSM Secretary of Foreign Affairs Lorin Robert and FSM Ambassador to Japan John Fritz accompanied the President.

Firstly, the President visited the Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Power Station and observed the decommissioning works after the severe accident caused by Tsunami in March 2011 and the site of ALPS treated water, the equipment which repurifies the emitted water from the plant before discharging to the ocean.

The representatives of Tokyo Electric Power Company explained the decommissioning process of the site and that they are adopting fully scientifically based way to treat the emitted water so that the discharged water fully satisfies both the national and international standard for radioactive safety standards.

They also promised that they will keep transparency of the treatment process and the data.

Then, the President met Mr. YOSHIDA Eiko, the mayor of Namie Town, who explained that remarkable reconstruction has been made in the town after the great earthquake in March 2011.

The president also met Mr. UCHIBORI Masao, the Governor of Fukushima Prefecture. The Governor extended his gratitude to the President's second visit to the Prefecture, explained substantial reconstruction the Prefecture achieved, and reaffirmed the friendship between the FSM and the prefecture.

Ambassador Kagomiya sincerely welcomed the President visit to the prefecture and extended his gratitude to the President's recognition of reconstruction work of the Prefecture as well as the Japan's strict observance of scientifically based safety standard for discharge of ALPS treated water.



WE ARE HIRING! JOIN OUR TEAM!

FSM Development Bank is re-announcing its vacancy for a suitable candidate to fill the position of **INTERNAL AUDITOR at FSMDB HQ in Kolonia, Pohnpei.**

Open Date: 03/20/25. Close Date: 04/20/25.

For more information: call 320-2840/5300 or email to info@fsmdb.fm or visit our website (www.fsmdb.fm)



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AUDITED CONSOLIDATED STATEMENT OF CONDITION (Year ended December 31, 2024; in 000's US Dollars)

Assets		Liabilities and Stockholders' Equity	
Cash and due from banks	\$ 33,937	Deposits:	
Interest bearing deposits in banks	54,482	Non-interest bearing	\$ 885,013
Total cash and cash equivalents	88,419	Interest bearing	1,428,494
Restricted cash	400	Total deposits	2,313,507
Investment securities available-for-sale, at fair value	397,086	Accrued interest payable	2,484
Investment securities held-to-maturity, at amortized cost	311,767	Subordinated debt, net	34,606
Federal Home Loan Bank stock, at cost	1,527	Other liabilities	46,838
Loans, net of allowance for credit losses	1,617,924	Total Liabilities	2,397,435
Accrued interest receivable	8,837	Stockholders' equity:	
Premises and equipment, net	19,478	Common stock	2,034
Goodwill	13,014	Preferred stock	980
Intangible assets	8,500	Additional paid-in capital, Common stock	24,989
Other assets	118,013	Additional paid-in capital, Preferred stock	8,803
Total Assets	\$ 2,584,965	Retained earnings	218,147
		Accumulated other comprehensive loss	(55,449)
		Non-controlling interest	7,184
		Common stock in treasury, at cost	(9,358)
		Preferred stock in treasury, at cost	(9,800)
		Total stockholders' equity	187,530
		Total Liabilities and Stockholders' Equity	\$ 2,584,965

AUDITED CONSOLIDATED STATEMENT OF INCOME (Year ended December 31, 2024; in 000's US Dollars)

Interest income	\$ 124,867
Interest expense	6,161
Net interest income	118,706
Provision for credit losses	5,292
Net interest income, after provision for credit losses	113,414
Non-interest income	38,961
Non-interest expense	119,175
Income before income taxes	33,200
Income tax expense	7,544
Net Income	\$ 25,656

BANK OF GUAM FEDERATED STATES OF MICRONESIA BRANCHES

AUDITED STATEMENT OF CONDITION (Year ended December 31, 2024; in 000's US Dollars)

Assets		Liabilities and Stockholders' Equity	
Cash and cash equivalents	\$ 2,528	Deposits:	
Loans, net of allowance for credit losses	22,122	Non-interest bearing	\$ 91,927
Accrued interest receivable	26	Interest bearing	143,265
Premises and equipment, net	383	Total deposits	235,192
Other assets	1,128	Accrued interest payable	815
Due from the Parent	211,083	Other liabilities	1,263
Total Assets	\$ 237,270	Total Liabilities	\$ 237,270

AUDITED STATEMENT OF INCOME (Year ended December 31, 2024; in 000's US Dollars)

Interest income	\$ 13,454
Interest expense	889
Net interest income	12,565
Provision for credit losses	398
Net interest income, after provision for credit losses	12,167
Non-interest income	1,465
Non-interest expense	2,857
Income before income taxes	10,775
Income tax expense	-
Net Income	\$ 10,775

PICS High School Vocational students impress in special Exhibit Showcase

FSM Central Implementation Unit

March 27, 2025

Pohnpei—Vocational students from PICS High School hosted an exciting and inspiring Exhibit Showcase, welcoming students, teachers, and families from neighboring high schools, including Madolenihmw High School. The event, funded by the World Bank FSM Skills and Employability Enhancement (SEE) Project held at PICS High School's Agriculture Shop, Carpentry Shop, and Auto-Mechanics Laboratory, celebrated student achievements in Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET), highlighting their creativity, practical skills, and dedication.

The showcase featured hands-on displays, interactive demonstrations, and finished projects from students specializing in Agriculture, Mechanics, Construction, Carpentry, and Auto-Mechanics. Visitors enjoyed exploring impressive works created by the students, gaining insight into the vocational training offered at PICS.

"Today's event provided a valuable opportunity for our talented students to showcase their abilities and accomplishments," said Mr. Rolter Olter, Assistant Principal of PICS CTE. "We are proud to see their hard work and commitment come to life, and we appreciate the collaboration and support from other high schools who joined us to celebrate vocational education."

Parents attending the event expressed pride in their children's achievements and the importance of vocational studies. "Schools should teach realistic skills like how to balance a checkbook, sewing, or cooking. These skills help manage the economy of the household and prepare students for practical life," said Marstella Jack, Attorney of Law and Board Chair of PIANGO. "Parents sometimes tend to be overprotective, preferring traditional classrooms with shade over practical work under the scorching sun of Micronesia. But vocational education is about supporting our kids' genuine interests and strengths". Her daughter is the only student in the Auto-Mechanics class "I told her, do whatever you want to do. The most important thing is that you do it the best way you can. You give it your best."

Carpentry students Hector Seminer (17) and Sean Isaac (16) also reflected enthusiastically on their experiences at the exhibition. Hector expressed excitement about the day, noting, "Everything today was new and very exciting. Seeing people genuinely interested in our work felt good and was motivating." Sean highlighted the value of teamwork and the practical challenges they overcame while showing the new tables they made, mentioning, "Working on these projects is challenging, especially using tools like the jigsaw, but teamwork makes everything easier."



Both students stressed the practical value of vocational training. Hector noted, "Whenever my dad needs help to build something, I already have the knowledge. It's useful for my family and gives me confidence." Inspired by the work of older students, Sean added, "What inspired me to choose vocational studies was seeing older students building amazing projects. It motivated me to learn and do it myself."

Their reflections highlighted not only their pride in their work but also the broader significance of vocational education in preparing them for future success.

Two representatives from the Chinese Embassy, also attended the event, further highlighting the international recognition and community support for vocational education. Additionally, Ms. Hyunjeong Lee, the Project Manager of the FSM Skills and Employability Enhancement (SEE) Project - funded by the World Bank and implemented by the FSM National Department of Education - was present to support and acknowledge local vocational initiatives. The SEE Project supported the organization of the vocational exhibit at PICS as part of its broader goal to enhance equitable access to quality vocational education across FSM by strengthening existing vocational schools, developing relevant curricula, and providing targeted training for teachers and apprenticeships for students.



Parliamentary Vice-Minister IKUINA attends President Simina's welcoming reception

Embassy of Japan to the FSM

March 26, 2025

Tokyo, Japan—On March 19, 2025, in Tokyo, Japan, Parliamentary Vice-Minister for Foreign Affairs Ms. IKUINA Akiko attended the reception welcoming President Simina to Japan. The overview is as follows:

At the outset, President Simina delivered his opening remarks, and mentioned that the official working visit to Japan was beneficial, and looks forward to

strengthening the relations between Japan and the Federated States of Micronesia (FSM).

Parliamentary Vice-Minister IKUINA, in her remarks, mentioned that Japan and the FSM are friends bound by "kizuna" (bond of trust) that has been fostered over 150 years and are important partners which share common values and principles such as in freedom, democracy, and the rule of law.

Furthermore, as confirmed during the 10th Pacific Islands Leaders Meeting (PALM10) held in July 2024, Japan and the Pacific Island Countries, including the FSM, will work together to address common challenges to strengthen the "kizuna" between the two countries.





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35	Promoting the sale of goods and services of others by means of contests and incentive award programs; providing incentive award programs through issuance and processing of loyalty points for purchase of the goods and services of others; providing incentive award programs through the issuance of gift cards, prepaid gift cards, prepaid stored value cards for the purpose of promoting and rewarding loyalty, discounts, offers, deals, coupons, rebates, rewards, and vouchers to participants for the purchase of the goods and services of others; customer loyalty services for commercial, promotional and/or advertising purposes, namely, administration of a program that allows participants to obtain and redeem points or awards for goods and/or services; business consulting services in the field of online payments; managing and tracking credit card, debit card, ACH, prepaid cards, payment cards, and other forms of payment transactions via electronic communications networks for business purposes; business information management, namely, electronic reporting of business analytics relating to payment processing, authentication, tracking, and invoicing; business management, namely, optimization of payments for businesses; order fulfillment services.
36	Financial services, namely, electronic funds transfer; clearing and reconciling financial transactions; financial services, namely, payment collection, payment transactions and information processing; providing a wide variety of payment and financial services, namely, issuing credit cards and lines of credit, electronic payment services involving electronic processing and subsequent transmission of bill payment data, bill payment services with guaranteed payment delivery, all conducted via a global communications network; credit card transaction processing services; debit card transaction processing services; electronic foreign exchange payment processing; payment processing services, namely, providing virtual currency transaction processing services for others; processing electronic payments made through prepaid cards; providing electronic mobile payment services for others; providing electronic processing of electronic funds transfer, ACH, credit card, debit card, checks and payments; credit services, namely, providing revolving credit account services; bill

payment services; fund wiring services; providing electronic access to funds via ATM machines and Point-of-Sale (POS) merchants, namely, providing secure commercial transactions and payment options using a mobile device at a point of sale; providing an online portal featuring payment collection, payment transactions and information processing, financial remittance, transfer of funds to make payments, access to stored value accounts to make payments, and the ability to perform debit card transactions to make payments; financial risk management services; financial transaction analysis, namely, analyzing transactions for payment fraud or illegality, compliance, namely, analyzing transactions for compliance with payment transaction regulations, and antifraud and money laundering controls, namely, analyzing transactions for fraud and illegal monetary transactions, stored value card and debit card services, namely, processing electronic payments made through prepaid cards; providing purchase protection services for goods and services purchased by others via a global computer network and wireless networks, namely, providing fraud reimbursement services in the field of credit card purchases and electronic payment purchases, and providing secure commercial transactions for credit card purchases and electronic payment purchases; reimbursement of funds for disputed items in the field of electronic payment purchases; loyalty program and incentive award program payment processing services.

42 Providing temporary use of online non-downloadable software for processing electronic payments and for transferring funds to and from others; providing temporary use of online non-downloadable software for remittance, transfer of funds, stored value accounts, debit card transactions, credit card transactions, financial transactions and account notifications; providing temporary use of online non-downloadable software for creating, preparing, managing, sending, processing, tracking, and reconciling invoices; providing temporary use of online non-downloadable software for issuing receipts regarding mobile payment transactions; providing temporary use of online non-downloadable authentication software for controlling access to and communications with computers and computer networks; providing temporary use of online non-downloadable software for creating and managing a business and an online store, namely, inventory management, order processing, order tracking, fulfillment of orders, sales tracking, collection of sales data, and sales analytics; providing temporary use of online non-downloadable computer software for managing customer relations (CRM) and loyalty programs, namely, software to create, manage, and analyze customer contact and account information, generate and track customer loyalty programs, and generate reports; providing online temporary use of non-downloadable computer software used for point of sale transactions; providing temporary use of online non-downloadable computer software used to train and manage employees, record employee hours worked, and generate payroll processing; application service provider featuring application programming interface (API) software for payment collection, payment transactions, and information processing; providing temporary use of online non-downloadable software for customizing Application Programming Interfaces (API's), integrating pay in methods to digital wallets, sharing payment data between users and generating reports, managing disputed charges, and automating chargebacks; Application Service Provider (ASP) featuring Application Programming Interface (API) software for payment collection, payment transactions, forwarding data and information processing; electronic monitoring of financial transactions for fraud, money laundering, and illegality in the field of electronic fund transfer and electronic payment processing services; providing temporary use of online non-downloadable computer software for tracking and analyzing payment activity; providing temporary use of online non-downloadable software to evaluate and detect fraud and illegality in payment transactions, and manage compliance validation.

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Any inquiry regarding said trademark may be referred to the attorneys for PayPal, Inc. as follows:

Hilborne, Hawkin & Co.
2102 Business Center Dr, #2003
Irvine, California 92612
United States of America
Telephone: (714) 283-1155
Facsimile: (714) 283-1555
Email: info@hilbornehawkin.com

Governor Stevenson A. Joseph welcomes proposal for a new Micronesian Airline Service

Pohnpei Public Information

March 20, 2025

Pohnpei—Governor Stevenson A. Joseph met with Mr. Donald Wen, Chief Executive Officer, Guam Nature Works LLC and Mr. Perdus Ehsa, local businessman to discuss an exciting proposal aimed at enhancing regional air transportation. Mr. Wen, a seasoned entrepreneur who previously operated a cargo airline in Micronesia and currently resides in Guam, presented his vision for establishing a new Micronesian airline service. Mr. Wen and Mr. Ehsa were accompanied by Mr. Eric Chien, Chief Financial Officer and Mr. Howard Li, Guam Nature Works, LLC.

Governor Joseph expressed his gratitude to Mr. Ehsa and Mr. Wen for their visit and for sharing their ambitious proposal, recognizing its potential to improve access to essential services, promote tourism, and foster economic development across the region. The Governor emphasized that establishing this airline would not only create employment opportunities but also facilitate increased commerce, trade, and cultural exchange among the islands.

During the discussion, Governor Joseph underscored the importance of regional cooperation in addressing transportation challenges and

encouraged Mr. Wen to present his proposal at the upcoming Micronesian Island Forum in Majuro. This gathering of regional leaders provides a strategic platform for collaboration, particularly on critical issues such as air connectivity, which remains a top priority for the subregion.



The Pohnpei State Government remains committed to supporting initiatives that enhance the connectivity and economic growth of the Micronesian region.

Governor Joseph looks forward to further discussions on this promising endeavor and the potential benefits it could bring to the people of Micronesia.

Governor Stevenson A. Joseph attends blessing ceremony for Caroline Islands Air’s new aircraft

Pohnpei Public Information

March 25, 2025

Pohnpei—Governor Stevenson A. Joseph joined the leadership of Caroline Islands Air (CIA) for the official blessing ceremony of the airline’s newest aircraft, the Partenavia P-68, at Pohnpei International Airport. The aircraft, boasting a top speed of 180 mph and a range of 1,300 miles, is set to enhance air connectivity within

the Federated States of Micronesia (FSM).

The ceremony, attended by government officials and employees of CIA, began with a blessing delivered by Reverend Herman Sado. Following the blessing, Governor Joseph delivered brief remarks, highlighting the importance of expanded intra-island air services for the economic growth

and accessibility of the FSM.

Governor Joseph commended Caroline Islands Air’s leadership, including Chief Executive Officer Bryan Mori and the CIA Board of Director Chairman Alik Jackson and members, for their commitment to improving inter-island transportation. The airline’s ongoing efforts align with the Governor’s broader vision of strengthening infrastructure and fostering

economic development through improved air services.

The Partenavia P-68 is expected to support essential passenger travel and cargo transport, ensuring that remote communities have greater access to vital services and economic opportunities. With this expansion, the FSM moves one step closer to a more efficient and reliable air transportation network.



DoD team meets with Palau leaders; provides updates on design of Malakal Wharf improvement project

By Catherine Cruz-Norton
Joint Task Force – Micronesia

March 21, 2025

KOROR, Palau—A Department of Defense (DoD) design team, consisting of representatives from Joint Task Force-Micronesia (JTF-M) and Naval Facilities Engineering and Systems Command (NAVFAC) Southwest, hosted a two-day meeting in Koror State in the Republic of Palau, Feb. 18-19, to share updates on the proposed Malakal Wharf improvement project.

“This was an opportunity for productive discussions with leaders about the proposed design, and to be available for any questions or concerns,” JTF-M Regional Environmental Coordinator, Mark Cruz said. “These meetings are a continuation of the ongoing coordination efforts between Palau and the Department of Defense as we aim to achieve mutual objectives.”

In addition to sharing the proposed timeline and phasing plan, the team

discussed updates for the ongoing Environmental Impact Statement, coordination efforts with the Environmental Quality Protection Board, metal debris disposal, dredge spoils beneficial reuse and future port capacity.

Members of the Koror State House of Traditional Leaders joined the discussion and expressed their appreciation for the continued communications. In the summer of 2025, the project will have public meetings to support the Environmental Impact Assessment. The team is led by a Palau-based environmental company that is managing the environmental process to ensure that the project complies with Palau environmental regulations.

The Malakal Wharf improvement project is intended to expand, strengthen and upgrade the wharf to meet modern design standards, account for environmental factors and to significantly increase the Port's

capability. At completion of the project, it will accommodate larger vessels and provide more deck space for receiving containers.

Joint Task Force-Micronesia synchronizes operations and activities across all domains, enabling a robust warfighting posture while enhancing

partner nation capacity. Dedicated to promoting regional stability, our mission performs Homeland Defense, Defense Support to Civil Authorities, and Foreign Humanitarian Assistance through a whole of government approach within its assigned joint operations area.



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vacation real estate timeshare exchange; membership club services, namely, providing information in the field of vacation real estate; providing a web site featuring a listing of real estate properties available for temporary exchange.

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MUNRO LEYS

Swearing-In ceremony for three new Pohnpei State Police Commissioners

Pohnpei Public Information

March 19, 2025

Pohnpei—Governor Stevenson A. Joseph administered the oath of office to three newly appointed members of the Pohnpei State Police Commission in a formal ceremony held at the Governor’s Office. The new Commissioners—Mr. Kelly Samuel, Mr. Jermis Noket, and Mr. Darney Phillip—were officially sworn in and received their certificates of appointment.

Following the swearing-in, Mr. Kelly Samuel delivered remarks on behalf of his fellow Commissioners, expressing gratitude for the trust and confidence placed in them by Governor Joseph and the 11th Pohnpei Legislature. He pledged their commitment to upholding the responsibilities of the Police Commission with diligence and integrity.

Governor Joseph, in his address, emphasized the critical role of the Police

Commission in maintaining accountability and ensuring the highest standards in public safety. He noted that while the Commission plays an essential advisory role to the Department of Public Safety, it remains underutilized. He encouraged the newly appointed Commissioners to conduct a thorough review of existing policies and procedures and to propose any necessary changes to laws or policies that may hinder their ability to perform their duties effectively.

Furthermore, Governor Joseph shared his vision of establishing a Department of Justice that would place the Department of Public Safety under the oversight of the Attorney General’s Office, similar to the structure of the FSM National Government. This initiative, he explained, would streamline law enforcement functions and strengthen the legal framework supporting public safety in Pohnpei State.

On behalf of Lt. Governor Ioanis, Governor Joseph extended his appreciation to the newly sworn-in Commissioners, the Speaker, and members of the 11th Pohnpei Legislature. He also acknowledged the unwavering support of the Commissioners’ spouses and families, recognizing their role in enabling the Commissioners to dedicate themselves to this important service.

The Pohnpei State Government congratulates Commissioner Samuel, Commissioner Noket, and Commissioner Phillip on their appointments and looks forward to their contributions in strengthening the integrity and effectiveness of public safety services in Pohnpei.



Governor Stevenson A. Joseph meets with Pohnpei Environmental Protection Agency Board to strengthen environmental initiatives

Pohnpei Public Information

March 18, 2025

Pohnpei—Governor Stevenson A. Joseph met today with the Board of Directors of the Pohnpei Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), including three board members (Antonio Sarapio, Zorro Donre, Natasha Franklin Nakasone), and the Executive Officer, Francisco Celestine to discuss critical environmental initiatives aimed at improving solid waste management and law enforcement collaboration across Pohnpei.

During the meeting, the Governor and the EPA Board addressed several key issues:

- **Solid Waste Management** – The Governor reaffirmed his commitment to improving waste management at government facilities, ensuring cleaner public spaces and efficient waste disposal systems.
- **EPA Staff Deputization** – In an effort to strengthen enforcement of anti-littering laws, Governor Joseph expressed his support for deputizing EPA staff, granting them the necessary authority to enforce environmental regulations more effectively.
- **Joint Law Enforcement** – Recognizing the importance of inter-agency cooperation, the Governor and the EPA Board agreed to enhance collaboration between the Department of Public Safety and EPA to enforce Pohnpei State laws regarding environmental protection.
- **Waste Management at Sports Facilities** – The Governor emphasized the need for better waste management at government-owned sports facilities, particularly after major events, to ensure compliance with EPA regulations and maintain cleanliness.

In addition to these discussions, Governor Joseph directed the EPA Board to prioritize the following action items:

- **Junk Car Removal Initiative** – The Governor called for the revival of the junk car removal program and urged the identification of funding sources to support this initiative.
- **Dekehtik Landfill Management** – He stressed the importance of prioritizing solid waste management at the Dekehtik landfill, with the goal of achieving significant progress before the end of his administration.
- **Environmental Compact Funds** – The Governor

seeks to engage FSM National government leadership to further discuss the allocation and utilization of Environmental Compact funds.

- **Komwonlaid Dredge Site Permit** – He asked for a status update on the Komwonlaid Dredge Site permit and requested a comprehensive report on its current standing.
- **Recycling Program Outsourcing** – The Governor encouraged the EPA Board to explore outsourcing the recycling program to private sector entities to enhance efficiency and sustainability.

Governor Joseph reiterated his administration’s strong commitment to environmental stewardship and emphasized the importance of collective action to preserve Pohnpei’s natural beauty for future generations. The meeting concluded with a shared commitment to moving forward with these initiatives in partnership with relevant agencies and stakeholders.

For more information, please contact the Office of the Governor, Pohnpei State Government.



Guam SBDC Director visits Pohnpei, announces plans for Small Business Development Center

Pohnpei Public Information

March 25, 2025

Pohnpei—Governor Stevenson A. Joseph welcomed Mr. Frederick Granillo, MBA, Director of the Guam Small Business Development Center (SBDC), during his official visit to Pohnpei. Mr. Granilla was accompanied by Acting Director of the Department of Resources and Development, Eugene Eperiam, and Chief of the Division of Commerce and Industries, Ms. Michaela Saimon.



The meeting, held at the Governor's Office, focused on the exciting announcement that a Small Business Development Center (SBDC) will soon be established in Pohnpei. This initiative aims to support local entrepreneurs by providing business advisory services, training, and access to essential resources that will help strengthen and grow small businesses across the state.

Governor Joseph expressed his enthusiasm for the project, emphasizing the vital role small businesses play in Pohnpei's economic development. "We are thrilled to welcome Mr. Granillo and to hear this great news. The establishment of an SBDC in Pohnpei is a major step forward in fostering a stronger business community, creating jobs, and supporting economic self-sufficiency," he said.

The upcoming SBDC will serve as a hub for aspiring and established business owners, offering guidance



on business planning, financial management, marketing strategies, and access to funding opportunities. The initiative aligns with the state's ongoing commitment to empowering local businesses and encouraging entrepreneurship.

The visit concluded with discussions on the next steps for establishing the center, including collaboration with key stakeholders to ensure the successful launch and operation of the program.

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Governor Joseph commends V6AH, Namweias, and LCS Productions for inspiring V6AH Sign-Off theme

Pohnpei Public Information

March 24, 2025

Pohnpei—Governor Stevenson A. Joseph expressed his heartfelt appreciation for the Pohnpei Public Broadcasting Corporation (V6AH), Namweias, and Mr. Landon Cook of LCS Productions (Utah, USA) for their dedication and collaboration in coordinating, directing, and producing the V6AH sign-off theme. This initiative, undertaken by Commissioner Peterson Sam, the Board of Directors, and the staff of V6AH, stands as a significant achievement in preserving and celebrating Pohnpeian culture and identity.

A luncheon was held at Fusion Restaurant to mark the official unveiling of the sign-off theme, showcasing a professional and deeply

moving tribute that resonates with all Pohnpeians. The video theme aligns with Governor Joseph’s continuing message to the youth of Pohnpei: to always remember that they are, first and foremost, Pohnpeian.

During the event, Governor Joseph delivered remarks, expressing gratitude to V6AH, Mr. Landon Cook, Namweias, and all sponsors and contributors who played a role in creating this meaningful video message. He commended their efforts in perpetuating Pohnpeian identity and storytelling through visual media, ensuring that the essence of Pohnpei’s heritage continues to inspire generations to come.

Sponsors of the sign-off message were also recognized during the event, including the Division of Tourism,

Department of Resources and Development, Governor's Office, One World Plaza, Speaker and Floor Leader of the 23rd FSM Congress, Black Sand Corporation, Genesis, AA Getaway, and Moses Insurance Executives, who were present to show their support.

Once final editing is complete, V6AH will officially release the video. Until then, we are unable to share it. Viewers are encouraged to follow V6AH’s YouTube and Facebook pages for updates and the official release of this exceptional production.



Pohnpei State Solid Waste Management Task Force holds second meeting, lays out strategic work plan

Pohnpei Public Information

March 20, 2025

Pohnpei—The Pohnpei State Solid Waste Management Task Force convened for its second meeting, reinforcing its commitment to improving solid waste management across the state. Established by Executive Order from Governor Stevenson A. Joseph, the Task Force is dedicated to implementing strategic solutions to address Pohnpei’s growing waste management challenges.

During the meeting, the Task Force outlined a structured work plan to guide its efforts over the coming months and years. This comprehensive plan is designed to enhance waste management through key short-term, mid-term, and long-term initiatives, ensuring sustainable and effective solutions for the people of Pohnpei.

Key Focus Areas of the Work Plan:

Short-Term Goals (0-6 Months)

- Finalizing key agreements and permits, including the review of a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) among stakeholders.
- Securing land for a new

landfill site through lease negotiations with landowners.

- Ensuring compliance with Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) regulations related to landfill operations.
- Obtaining necessary environmental and construction permits for the landfill.

Mid-Term Goals (6-12 Months)

- Developing a comprehensive design for a sanitary landfill that meets environmental standards.
- Identifying and securing funding sources, including grants, to support landfill construction and waste management initiatives.

Long-Term Goals (1-3 Years)

- Implementing a phased approach to landfill development, ensuring proper staging and resource allocation.
- Constructing and operationalizing the landfill while adhering to regulatory standards.
- Establishing a monitoring and evaluation framework to assess and enhance landfill operations over time.

The Task Force is chaired by the Executive Officer of Pohnpei State EPA, Mr. Francisco Celestine. Also in attendance were the Governor’s Chief of Staff Benjamin Rodriguez, the Acting Administrator of the Office of Transportation & Infrastructure (T&I), Ricky Lebehn, the CEO of Pohnpei Utilities Corporation (PUC), Nixon Anson, Pohnpei Transportation Authority (PTA) Commissioner Welsin Helgenberger and Mr. Coltrick Albert, representing Pohnpei Port Authority. Additionally,



Mr. Brian Etscheit attended the meeting to discuss assistance with his family’s land adjacent to the current landfill site.

Governor Joseph emphasized the importance of collaboration and decisive action in tackling solid waste management issues. The Task Force will continue engaging with stakeholders, including government agencies, private sector partners, and community groups, to ensure its initiatives are effectively implemented. Public participation and awareness will remain a crucial component of the state’s waste management strategy.

As the Task Force moves forward with this plan, the Pohnpei State Government encourages the public to stay informed and involved in efforts to maintain a clean and sustainable environment.



Bank of the Federated States of Micronesia
Statements of Condition
December 31, 2024 and 2023

ASSETS	2024	2023
Cash and due from banks	\$4,078,905	\$4,431,707
Federal funds sold	4,590,000	7,505,000
Interest-bearing deposits in banks	100,120,554	72,069,768
Cash and cash equivalents	108,789,459	84,006,475
Interest-bearing deposits in banks	15,516,000	26,554,000
Securities available for sale	63,139,763	43,549,635
Loans, net of allowance for loan losses	58,053,696	58,659,504
Accrued interest receivable	630,954	565,306
Prepaid expenses and other assets	891,907	849,605
Right of use assets, net	274,371	476,207
Premises and equipment, net	1,948,360	1,941,687
Total Assets	\$249,244,510	\$216,602,419
LIABILITIES AND STOCKHOLDERS' EQUITY		
Liabilities:		
Deposits:		
Noninterest-bearing	\$84,092,589	\$75,853,717
Interest-bearing	134,052,834	112,208,958
Total deposits	218,145,423	188,062,675
Accrued interest payable	159,393	16,955
Accrued expenses and other liabilities	711,998	690,402
Operating lease liabilities	279,468	484,964
Total liabilities	\$219,296,282	\$189,254,996
Commitments and contingencies		
Stockholders' equity:		
Common Stock, \$5 par value, 1,000,000 shares authorized;		
934,348 shares issued and outstanding	4,671,740	4,671,740
Additional paid-in capital	4,663,576	4,663,576
Retained earnings	23,686,254	21,785,405
Accumulated other comprehensive loss	(3,073,342)	(3,773,298)
Total stockholders' equity	29,948,228	27,347,423
Total Liabilities & Stockholder's Equity	\$249,244,510	\$216,602,419

Bank of the Federated States of Micronesia
Statements of Comprehensive Income
Years Ended December 31, 2024 and 2023

	2024	2023
Interest income:		
Loans	\$5,480,771	\$5,329,494
Interest-bearing deposits	4,055,735	3,831,766
Investment securities	1,384,723	861,988
Federal funds sold	300,248	292,734
Total interest income	11,221,477	10,315,982
Interest expense:		
Other time deposits	897,354	90,608
Savings	477,165	480,928
Total interest expense	1,374,519	571,536
Net interest income	9,846,958	9,744,446
Provision for credit losses		
	312,000	830,000
Net interest income after provision for credit losses	9,534,958	8,914,446
Non-interest income:		
Loan fees	262,427	236,141
Service charges on deposit accounts	168,397	165,771
Other	591,627	546,303
Total Non-interest Income	1,022,451	948,215
Non-interest expenses:		
Salaries and wages	2,595,886	2,423,360
Occupancy	628,532	375,094
Employee benefits	471,981	451,138
Furniture and equipment	391,611	345,682
Electronic banking	385,862	446,830
Data processing	382,185	414,077
Correspondent bank fees	327,495	265,555
Travel	295,981	194,698
Professional fees	229,304	243,454
Gross receipts and use taxes	155,903	149,842
Director and shareholder	154,747	121,743
Insurance	139,873	126,995
Stationery and supplies	136,940	122,397
Telephone	128,164	126,045
FDIC deposit insurance	101,103	101,103
Business development	66,996	51,248
Postage	17,605	16,509
Credit and collection	17,403	8,902
Teller and operating losses	14,728	3,866
Miscellaneous	117,535	88,470
Total Non-Interest Expense	6,759,834	6,077,008
Net Income	3,797,575	3,785,653
Other comprehensive gain (loss):		
Net unrealized gain (loss) on investment securities	699,956	1,346,596
Comprehensive income (loss)	\$4,497,531	\$5,132,249

Governor Joseph welcomes seventh graders from Wone Elementary School, shares insights on government and leadership

Pohnpei Public Information

March 24, 2025

Pohnpei—Governor Stevenson A. Joseph recently welcomed a group of 7th-grade students from Wone Elementary School, Kitti, to the Governor’s Office as part of their educational visit to learn about the functions of the Pohnpei State Government.

During their visit, Governor Joseph provided the students with an engaging and informative overview of the three branches of government—the

Executive, Judicial, and Legislative—and explained their distinct roles, duties, and responsibilities in serving the people of Pohnpei. He emphasized the importance of governance in ensuring fairness, justice, and progress for the state.

Sharing his own experiences as Governor, he encouraged the students to embrace leadership and service with a deep sense of responsibility. He reminded them that, above all else, they are Pohnpeians first and foremost, with a duty to uphold the values and traditions that define their identity.

Governor Joseph left the students with three guiding principles to shape their future actions: Love, Honesty, and Perseverance or Devotion—or in Pohnpeian vernacular, Limpoak, Mehlel oh Loaloapwoat. He stressed that these values will help them grow into responsible citizens and future leaders who contribute positively to their communities and the state as a whole.

The visit was a valuable opportunity for the students to engage directly with



their state leadership, ask questions, and gain a deeper understanding of how their government functions. The Governor’s Office remains committed to supporting educational initiatives that inspire the next generation of leaders in Pohnpei.

COM-FSM leadership meets with Pohnpei State officials to advance Teaching Clinic and Super Dispensary project

Pohnpei Public Information

March 27, 2025

Pohnpei—The Governor of Pohnpei State, Stevenson A. Joseph, welcomed College of Micronesia-FSM (COM-FSM) President, Dr. Theresa Koroivulaono, and Facilities Manager, Mr. Francisco Mendiola, for a crucial discussion on advancing the proposed teaching clinic and super dispensary at the COM-FSM campus. This initiative represents a major step forward in improving healthcare access and educational opportunities for the people of Pohnpei.

The project aims to establish a state-of-the-art health services facility that will provide comprehensive medical care and serve as a training ground for the next generation of healthcare professionals. This collaborative effort between COM-FSM and the Pohnpei State Government seeks to address longstanding healthcare challenges,

particularly in remote and underserved communities.

Key highlights of the initiative include:

- Development of a modern health services facility with expanded medical capabilities.
- Integration of dental services and clinical training programs for COM-FSM students.
- Strategic efforts to mitigate healthcare professional shortages by providing local training opportunities.
- Enhanced accessibility to healthcare for Pohnpei’s residents, reducing the need for off-island medical travel.

Governor Joseph emphasized the importance of this partnership, stating, “This project underscores our commitment to strengthening healthcare infrastructure while simultaneously investing in the education of our future healthcare workforce. We are working together to create sustainable solutions that will have a lasting impact on our community.”

The teaching clinic and super dispensary were originally conceived under previous leadership and have been further refined through ongoing collaboration. Efforts are currently underway to finalize a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) that will outline the project’s financial, operational, and administrative framework.



COM-FSM President Dr. Koroivulaono echoed the significance of this endeavor, noting that the facility will provide vital healthcare services while giving our students hands-on experience that prepares them for future careers in the medical field.

A ceremonial key handover is planned in the coming months, marking a major milestone in the project’s transition from planning to implementation. The new health services center is expected to be a crucial resource, particularly for those in remote areas who have limited access to medical care.

New leadership at Pohnpei Port Authority

Pohnpei Public Information

March 29, 2025

Governor Stevenson A. Joseph officially swore in Mrs. Limanman Helgenberger as the newest member of the Pohnpei Port Authority Board of Directors. With her husband, Mr. Bernie Helgenberger, holding the Bible, Mrs. Helgenberger took the oath of office, committing to serve in the best interest of Pohnpei.

Both Governor Joseph and Mrs. Helgenberger expressed gratitude to the 11th Pohnpei Legislature for their support. Governor Joseph reaffirmed the importance of service and urged Mrs. Helgenberger to always keep the people of Pohnpei at the heart of her decisions as she takes on this critical role.



PICRC releases new report on reef fish stocks in Palau, finds overall biomass decreased between 2021 and 2023

Palau International Coral Reef Center

March 31, 2025

Palau—Researchers at the Palau International Coral Reef Center (PICRC) have published a technical report titled ‘Fishery-independent monitoring of reef fish stocks in Palau from 2017 to 2023’ with results indicating that the biomass of reef fish decreased across Palau between 2021 and 2023.

This monitoring, carried out every two years, aims to collect information on the abundance, biomass, and size of Palau’s commercially-important reef fish species. Small-scale coral reef fisheries are vital in Palau, with seafood being the main source of protein. What’s more, Palau’s economy is heavily reliant on tourism and divers are willing to pay more to see larger fish such as kemedukl and maml. However, since the 1970s, there have been increasing concerns that reef fish stocks have declined due to overfishing and a more recent study showed that Palau’s fisheries are fully exploited. PICRC’s monitoring aims to assess the effectiveness of fisheries management measures put in place to recover reef fish stocks. 94 sites across Palau are surveyed every two years at two different depths, 15-20m and 5-10m, using SCUBA diving. The results were compared across years, habitats, and

depths to form a picture of the status of reef fish stocks in Palau.

The most recent monitoring, carried out in 2023, found that fish biomass and diversity were highest in the western fore-reefs and lowest in the inner reefs. The researchers found that overall fish biomass increased significantly from 2017 to 2021, but then decreased in 2023, predominantly driven by changes in the inner reef and western fore-reef habitats. The decrease may have been caused by natural fluctuations in fish numbers or possibly the effects of tourists returning after COVID-19, leading to an increase in fishing pressure. Fish biomass in the western fore-reefs and channel habitats has been significantly affected by fishing pressure from Koror, with increasing fishing pressure leading to lower biomass. Overall, fish biomass at most survey sites was low compared to local Marine Protected Areas (MPAs).

The researchers also assessed 16 species for size structure. Four of these species had a decrease in average length over time, three had an increase, and the rest showed no change and high numbers of immature fish were observed.

Overall, the technical report highlights the need for continued monitoring and better fisheries management to regulate the harvest of these species. Management

suggestions include increasing the size of MPAs to make sure fish species with larger home ranges are being protected, looking at establishing MPAs in important locations for reef fish, improving enforcement, and developing minimum size limits for vulnerable species.

The report is available on the PICRC website (www.picrc.org) for anyone who wishes to get a copy. For more information, please contact the Director of Research Department, Ms. Geraldine Rengiil at 488-6950 or grengiil@picrc.org.



China hands over funds for 2025 Kitti Agricultural Fair

Embassy of China to the FSM

March 20, 2025

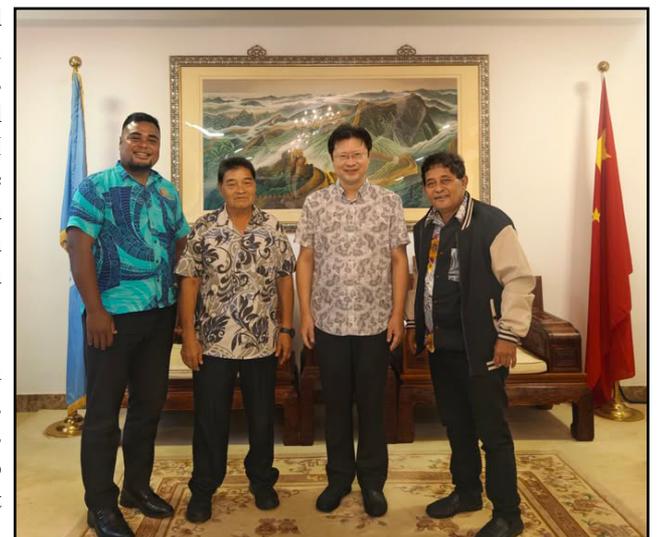
Pohnpei—On March 20, the Chinese Embassy in the Federated States of Micronesia held a handover ceremony of the donation for the 2025 Kitti Agricultural Fair by the Chinese Embassy to Kitti Municipal Government. Chinese Ambassador H.E. Wu Wei, T.H. McGarry Miguel, Vice Speaker of the Pohnpei State Legislature and Acting President of the Micronesia-China Friendship Association, T.H. Emerson E. Eperiam, Mayor of Kitti, T.H. Salvason Salvador, Speaker of the Kitti Council attended the ceremony.

exchanges and cooperation between China and the FSM. Wu said that the Embassy’s assistance to the best of its ability for the Kitti Agricultural Fair, which demonstrates China’s support for FSM’s economic development, improvement of people’s livelihood and cultural protection, is a vivid illustration of China- FSM friendship. China will work with the FSM side to implement the important consensus reached by the two heads of state, deepen practical cooperation in various fields including agriculture on the basis of the one-China principle, and promote the in-depth development of bilateral relations.

On behalf of Kitti, T.H. Miguel thanked China for its long-term support and assistance to Pohnpei State in its local development, and said that China- FSM friendship has taken root in the people’s heart. Pohnpei State and Kitti Municipality will continue to firmly support the one-China policy and let more people benefit from China- FSM practical cooperation.

Ambassador Wu spoke highly of the important role of Pohnpei State and Kitti Municipality in advancing local

T.H. Eperiam and T.H. Salvador thanked the Embassy and hope that the two sides deepen friendly cooperation and better improve the well-being of local people.



Ambassador Wu Wei attended the signing ceremony of MOU on the road projects in Kosrae State and Yap State

Embassy of China to the FSM

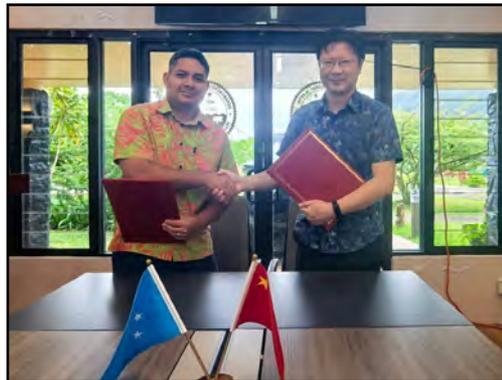
March 27, 2025

FSM—The signing ceremony of MOU on the road projects in Kosrae State and Yap State between China International Development Cooperation Agency and Department of Transportation, Communications & Infrastructure (TC&I) of the FSM was held in the Department of Foreign Affairs on March 26. H.E. Wu Wei, Chinese Ambassador to the FSM, and T.H. Edward Albert, Acting Secretary of the Department of TC&I, signed the MOU on behalf of the competent authorities of the two countries. T.H. Lorin S. Robert, Secretary of Foreign Affairs and other officials attended the ceremony.

quality Belt and Road cooperation and implement the Global Development Initiative. China is willing to strengthen practical cooperation with the FSM on the basis of the one-China principle and push forward the in-depth development of China-FSM Comprehensive Strategic Partnership for the benefit of the two peoples.

Robert and other officials thanked China for its long-term support and assistance to the FSM, saying that the FSM side will continue to firmly adhere to the one-China policy, deepen friendly cooperation with China and promote the continuous development of bilateral relations.

Wu said that the signing of the MOU on the road projects is a concrete measure to implement the important consensus reached by President Xi Jinping and President Wesley W. Simina, an important outcome of the bilateral meeting between Vice Premier Ding Xuexiang and Vice President Aren B. Palik in Boao, and a practical action to jointly promote high-



AFD and SPC sign funding agreement of Euro 4.5 million

Secretariat of the Pacific Community

March 28, 2025

Pacific—Today, the Agence française de développement (AFD) and the Pacific Community (SPC) signed a significant funding agreement of Euro 4.5 million to support the "Strengthening Health Security in the Indo-Pacific Region" project.

Emerging Infectious Disease Risk Evaluation network (ECOMORE) in Southeast Asia; the One Health network for epidemiological surveillance and alert management (SEGA One Health) in the Indian Ocean; and the PPHSN in the Pacific region with the Pacific Community (SPC) being the focal point of the PPHSN Coordinating Body.

This project, to be implemented by SPC with funding from AFD, will span the next four years and builds upon AFD's prior support of Euro 5 million to the Pacific Public Health Surveillance Network (PPHSN) from 2018 to 2023. The new funding agreement represents the second phase of AFD's ongoing commitment to enhancing health security across the region.

Mrs. Virginie Bleitrach, AFD Regional Director of the Pacific Ocean, mentioned that through this new phase of collaboration with PPHSN, AFD reinforces its commitment to an expanded network that allows for cross-regional learning and the sharing of experiences between the Pacific, the Indian Ocean, and Asia. This approach aims to capitalize on collective expertise to improve epidemiological surveillance and public health preparedness.

Over the last several years, AFD has supported the structuring and development of three regional epidemiological surveillance networks in the Indo-Pacific region: the Economic Development, Ecosystem Modifications, and

Furthermore, this project strengthens a long-standing partnership between AFD and SPC, which builds around

Click here for continuation on next page

Governor Stevenson A. Joseph welcomes UN Resident Coordinator a.i. for Micronesia, Tapan Mishra, on courtesy visit

Pohnpei Public Information

March 25, 2025

Pohnpei—Governor Stevenson A. Joseph welcomed Tapan Mishra, the United Nations Resident Coordinator a.i. for Micronesia, during a courtesy call at the Governor's Office. Their discussions centered on strengthening partnerships to support Pohnpei's development priorities, including economic growth, food and water security, and sustainable development.

Mr. Mishra, newly appointed to his role, reaffirmed the UN's commitment to adding value to Pohnpei's development efforts as the hub and capital of the Federated States of Micronesia. He recognized the State's Strategic Development Plan (SDP) as a vital framework for progress and expressed the UN's interest in exploring

opportunities to support key initiatives.

Among the topics discussed were Pohnpei's potential in agrobusiness, particularly in addressing the scarcity of fresh green fruits and expanding opportunities for local farmers. Governor Joseph and Mr. Mishra acknowledged the importance of improving food security and resilience against climate-related challenges, emphasizing sustainable rainwater management as a critical factor.

The UN Resident Coordinator highlighted the global expertise that the UN system offers in development, stressing that the organization has no specific agenda but seeks to align with Pohnpei's priorities. He also spoke on the vision for the UN One Micronesia House, which aims to enhance UN engagement and support across the

region.

Governor Joseph welcomed the discussion, emphasizing the importance of strong partnerships in overcoming challenges and maximizing opportunities for Pohnpei. He acknowledged that international collaboration is essential for addressing key issues such as infrastructure, economic diversification, and environmental sustainability.

Mr. Mishra described his visit as a privilege, stating that FSM and Pohnpei present unique opportunities for development and cooperation. He reiterated the UN's readiness to assist in addressing pressing concerns, particularly in areas of water security and energy security.

Both parties expressed optimism about future collaboration and the potential for impactful projects that align with Pohnpei's development aspirations. The meeting reaffirmed the State Government's commitment to engaging with global partners to build a sustainable and prosperous future for Pohnpei and its people.



Hegseth addresses Indo-Pacom partnerships during first trip to region

By Matthew Olay
U.S. Department of Defense News

March 26, 2025

Honolulu—Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth discussed his strategic vision for the Defense Department, as it relates to the Indo-Pacific region, while delivering remarks to alumni of the Daniel K. Inouye Asia-Pacific Center for Security Studies in Honolulu yesterday.

Founded in 1995, the DKI APCSS is a DOD institute that offers a forum for military and civilian leaders from the region to come together and discuss local and global security matters.

Noting this was the first time he was able to address military and civilian leaders in the U.S. Indo-Pacific Command area of responsibility since being sworn in, Hegseth told the virtual and in-person audience that it was important for him to address that group first.

"Many of you graduated from our premier forum for studying the Indo-Pacific, and for building ties among national security leaders who are engaged in this region," Hegseth told the audience.

"Our relationships — and our teamwork — form the foundation of achieving peace through strength," he added.

To that end, Hegseth said achieving peace through strength will be attained by adhering to the three core tenets he listed in his Jan. 25, 2025, message to the force: restoring the warrior ethos, rebuilding the military and reestablishing deterrence.

"By restoring the warrior ethos, U.S. forces assigned to the Indo-Pacific will

be the best trained and best equipped forces in the world," Hegseth said, adding recruiting numbers are up throughout the armed services, and "our opponents are taking notice."

Regarding rebuilding the military, Hegseth said DOD will work with the defense industrial base to "rapidly and responsively deliver the right tools to our warfighters in real time."

He also noted that DKI APCSS has been focused on supply chain security for U.S. weapons systems, as well as studying the potential for coproduction and sustainment of U.S. military platforms and munitions with international partners.

"Please keep up the great work; we need it, [and] it is more important than ever," Hegseth said.

Regarding reestablishing deterrence in the region, Hegseth said the U.S. will stand with its allies and partners to deter China's aggression, and that he believes each ally, partner and friend in the region contributes their own unique manner of deterrence.

Hegseth finished his remarks by encouraging allies in the region to recommit to the partnership and to doing their part to reestablishing deterrence and, ultimately, peace through strength.

"No one should question the resolve of the United States of America to defend our interests in the Indo-Pacific and beyond," Hegseth said.

"We will do this through the deterrent power of the strongest, most effective, most lethal fighting force in the world ... supported by — and in partnership with — capable, like-minded allies and partners," he added.



As part of his first official visit to the Indo-Pacom AOR, Hegseth is spending his time in Hawaii primarily meeting with civilian and military leaders.

Following his stay in Hawaii, Hegseth is scheduled to travel to Guam, the Philippines and Japan to meet with

senior U.S. military and civilian leadership.

He also intends to participate in a series of international bilateral meetings, with a goal aimed at strengthening U.S. alliances and partnerships toward a shared vision for a free and open Indo-Pacific.

...AFD

Continued from previous page

various initiatives, including CRISP/RESCUE, the Kiwa Initiative, and the Initiative Pacific Ocean, currently under development. This continued collaboration underscores AFD's dedication to sustainable development and resilience in the Pacific region.

Dr. Stuart Minchin, Director-General of SPC, expressed gratitude for AFD's continued support, stating, "We are thankful for AFD's support, as it significantly strengthens critical health areas, including laboratory capabilities, climate health, surveillance, and response systems. These efforts are essential in promoting the well-being of Pacific communities and improving the delivery of health services throughout the region."

The project will focus on strengthening integrated approaches to human, animal and environmental health in our region through the Pacific Public Health Surveillance Network.



USINDOPACOM hosts U.S. Secretary of Defense Pete Hegseth

By Petty Officer 1st Class John Bellino
U.S. Indo-Pacific Command

March 26, 2025

Honolulu—U.S. Secretary of Defense Pete Hegseth traveled to Hawaii, March 24-26, 2025, where he received briefings on regional security challenges and the strength of alliances and partnerships across the Indo-Pacific.



placing a wreath at the USS Arizona Memorial.

Additionally, Hegseth engaged with key institutions, including the Daniel K. Inouye Asia-Pacific Center for Security Studies (DKI-APCSS) and the Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency (DPAA).

USINDOPACOM is committed to



enhancing stability in the Indo-Pacific region by promoting security cooperation, encouraging peaceful development, responding to contingencies, deterring aggression and, when necessary, prevailing in conflict.

Hegseth brings DOD's message to troops on Guam

By Matthew Olay
U.S. Department of Defense News

March 27, 2025

Guam—Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth arrived today in Guam, where he addressed hundreds of troops stationed in the region and a group of World War II veterans in attendance about the Defense Department's aligned core tenets of restoring the warrior ethos, rebuilding the military and reestablishing deterrence.

While delivering his remarks to the service members in a large aircraft hangar at Andersen Air Force Base, Hegseth emphasized that the deterrence piece of DOD's philosophy is especially significant in the Indo-Pacific region, which he referred to as the "tip of the spear."

"You are at the front of the formation. I don't have to tell you that [because] you [already] know that," Hegseth told the troops.

"You're living in history; you're living in reality, and you're living in a dangerous neighborhood. You are America's power projection and platform," he said, adding that the entire chain of command — including commander in chief, President Donald J. Trump — is relying on the men and women stationed in the U.S. Indo-

Pacific Command area of operations to be ready for any potential conflict.

Stating the motto that resonates the most with him is "Those who long for peace must prepare for war," Hegseth made clear that — while armed conflict in the Indo-Pacom region is the least desirable outcome of any geopolitical differences — the U.S. military must be prepared for any contingencies.

"We don't seek war. We don't seek confrontation. But, by being strong, our belief is that we'll deter it," Hegseth said.

Along with hitting on the topline strategies for DOD going forward, Hegseth also took time during his remarks to remind the troops that he hasn't always been at the most senior levels of leadership in the military's chain of command.

He said that when he was a junior officer deployed overseas, he used to spend a lot of time "as far away from the flagpole as possible," (meaning that it was preferable to stay focused on the mission at hand rather than get wrapped up in high-level strategies or politics).

"Well, now it seems I am the flagpole," he jested, adding, "But my job is to understand where you sit, to understand what's going through your

mind, what you're thinking about [and] anticipating what you need to train, to prepare, to have the guidance necessary for a future fight."

Hegseth also said that having the opportunity to visit Guam as the 29th defense secretary has special meaning to him, as he has a late family relative who was stationed there in the mid-1940s.

Milton Haugen, Hegseth's late maternal grandfather, was commissioned as a U.S. Navy ensign and served aboard the Cleveland-class cruiser USS Amsterdam in 1945, which supported attacks against Japan at the tail end of the war.

Following Japan's surrender, Hegseth said his grandfather was stationed on Guam, where he was put in charge of running the base commissary, which was basically the equivalent of running the only grocery store in the area.

"He made sure people were taken care of. He did his job. He played his role," Hegseth explained, adding that seeing all of the service members who currently work

to support the Indo-Pacom mission is emblematic of all those who have served in the region before them.

"Milt Haugen could have been sitting in seats just like this," Hegseth told the crowd in the hangar. "And he would have been proud to look out at the men and women in this formation who carried on that legacy."



Empowering Communities: The lifeline of library services in the Federated States of Micronesia

Erika E. Billen
Library Technician
Pohnpei Public Library

March 28, 2025

Pohnpei—In the heart of the Pacific, our libraries serve as more than just repositories of books; they are lifelines of knowledge, connection, and opportunity. Thanks to the unwavering support of the Institute for Museum and Library Services (IMLS), libraries across the Federated States of Micronesia (FSM) have been able to bridge gaps, provide critical resources, and transform lives.

One of the most impactful programs made possible by IMLS is the early literacy development and grade-level reading initiatives. These programs ensure that our youngest learners are given a strong foundation in reading, equipping them with the skills needed for future academic success. By fostering a love for books and storytelling from an early age, these initiatives set our children on the path to lifelong learning.

Complementing these efforts, summer reading programs for kids offer engaging and educational opportunities to keep young minds active during school breaks. These programs prevent learning loss, encourage curiosity, and create a culture where reading is both fun and enriching. Through partnerships

with educators and parents, museums and libraries are making literacy a community-wide commitment.

Beyond books, libraries have become digital hubs, thanks to IMLS's support in providing high-speed internet access. In a nation where connectivity can be challenging, these services open doors to knowledge, communication, and global opportunities. Students, job seekers, and entrepreneurs alike rely on library internet access for research, career advancement, and business growth.

For job seekers, the assistance provided by libraries has been nothing short of life-changing. Resume workshops, online job application support, and career counseling have helped many individuals secure employment and achieve financial stability. Libraries have become essential in fostering economic mobility by providing resources tailored to professional growth.

IMLS's support extends to accessibility as well. Braille and talking books have transformed the reading experience for individuals with visual impairments, ensuring that no one is left behind. The commitment to inclusive learning and engagement empowers all members of our community to participate fully in the wealth of knowledge libraries offer.

Students and faculty have also greatly benefited from the wealth of homework and research resources available through our libraries. With access to academic databases, research materials, and knowledgeable library staff, learners at all levels are given the tools they need to succeed.

In addition, veterans in FSM now have access to telehealth spaces equipped with technology and staff support. These dedicated areas provide a bridge between our nation's heroes and the healthcare services they need, reducing the burden of travel and increasing access to essential care. This initiative underscores the library's role as a place of healing and support for those who have served our country.

STEM programs, simulation equipment, and workforce training opportunities have also been game-changers for FSM's youth and job seekers. By providing hands-on learning experiences and skills development, these resources prepare individuals for in-demand careers and contribute to the country's growing economy.

Budding entrepreneurs have found invaluable support through small business resources offered by our libraries. From business planning workshops to market research tools, these services empower individuals to

turn their ideas into thriving ventures, strengthening local economies and fostering innovation.

The support provided by IMLS has turned our libraries into beacons of learning, opportunity, and progress. They are not merely buildings filled with books; they are dynamic community spaces that uplift, empower, and connect. The impact of these services cannot be overstated—each program, each resource, and each opportunity provided is shaping a brighter, more informed, and more equitable future for the Federated States of Micronesia.

As we look ahead, continued investment in our libraries will ensure that these vital services remain accessible to all. With the steadfast support of IMLS, our libraries will continue to be pillars of education, economic growth, and community well-being for generations to come.

Erika E. Billen,
Library Technician, Pohnpei Public Library

The following links provide more information, join the fight and be aware. Knowledge is power: > <https://www.ala.org/news/2025/03/ala-statement-white-house-assault-institute-museum-and-library-services>

Joint Statement on the United States Department of Defense and Federated States of Micronesia understanding on Shared Force Posture and Infrastructure Priorities

United States Department of Defense

March 27, 2025

Washington D.C.—Secretary of Defense Pete Hegseth and President Wesley Simina of the Federated States of Micronesia (FSM) announced today that they reached a mutual understanding to enable the U.S. Department of Defense to begin planning and construction on key infrastructure projects in the State of Yap.

This effort is the product of several

years of close collaboration, and its conclusion reflects the close and enduring partnership between the United States and FSM, underpinned by the Compact of Free Association.

Future investments in FSM and Yap State by the U.S. Department of Defense are estimated to exceed two billion dollars. These projects are designed to provide strategic operational and exercise capabilities for U.S. forces.

These projects will strengthen our deterrence and regional posture and ensure a free and open Indo-Pacific.

The principals committed to continuing to work closely together as projects advance.



Secretary of Defense emphasizes lethality, deterrence on Guam

by Lt. Cmdr. Michelle Tucker
Joint Region Marianas

March 28, 2025

ANDERSEN AIR FORCE BASE, Guam
— Secretary of Defense Pete Hegseth arrived on Guam March 27 to meet with military and civilian leaders and speak with troops – his first visit to Guam since his January confirmation.

The visit was the second stop on Hegseth's Pacific engagement tour, which began in Hawaii and will continue from Guam to the Philippines and Japan. Hegseth focused on strengthening alliances and bolstering warrior ethos among service members, further strengthening the United States' deterrence posture in the region.

More than 600 service members from military commands across Guam gathered for a troop call at Andersen Air Force Base to kick off the visit. Hegseth praised them for their mission contributions, noting Guam's strategic location in the Indo-Pacific region, and charged them to increase lethality and readiness.

"What unites us is who we are and our purpose as Americans," Hegseth said. "We are in the business of warfighting. You are warfighters on behalf of our nation and

we are [going to] make sure you have a military built and prepared for that fight ... American leadership ensures the free world is protected – to advance American interests and the interests of our allies."

The visit fell one day after the 80th anniversary of end of the Battle of Iwo Jima that occurred just 750 miles north northwest of Guam. During the troop call, Hegseth recognized a group of seven Iwo Jima veterans who traveled to Guam to attend commemoration events. He thanked them for their courage and fortitude, and for paving the way for Americans in the Pacific.

Commander, Joint Region Marianas Navy Rear Adm. Brent DeVore greeted Hegseth upon arrival along with other senior military leaders on island.

"The Secretary's visit underscored the Department of Defense's commitment to the security of Guam and the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, as well as the entire Micronesia region's strategic importance to the Pacific," DeVore said. "We highlighted our efforts and contributions to strategic deterrence, demonstrating U.S. strength and daily preparedness – and tangible examples of ongoing work in cyber

security, missile defense, our construction projects throughout Guam, CNMI, and the COFA states, and infrastructure resilience."

"We all emphasized the interconnectedness between the Department of Defense efforts and our local communities, in all we do," he added.

During a military roundtable, Hegseth received briefs from installation commanders and key leaders throughout the region detailing capabilities and future growth on Guam. Commander, 36th Wing, Andersen Air Force Base Air Force Brig. Gen. Thomas Palenske stressed to Hegseth the importance of the work the team is doing on Guam.

"Andersen Air Force Base is incredibly vital to the mission in the Indo-Pacific," Palenske said. "Our strategic location and the exceptional readiness of our personnel reinforce our commitment to deterrence and combat readiness in the region. The capabilities showcased and discussed during this visit not only empower our forces but also strengthen our alliances and ensure we stand ready to respond to any challenge."

The "Island Knights" of Helicopter Sea Combat Squadron (HSC) 25 flew Hegseth

in an MH-60S Sea Hawk helicopter for an aerial tour of the island. During the tour, Naval Facilities Engineering Command Marianas Commanding Officer Navy Capt. Troy Brown briefed Hegseth on current and future construction and resiliency improvements on Guam including the Glass Breakwater, which was damaged during Typhoon Mawar. The breakwater is critical to harbor protection and the supply chain for the entire island.

Finally, Guam Gov. Lou Leon Guerrero, Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands (CNMI) Gov. Arnold Palacios, and Guam Rep. James Moylan met with Hegseth to discuss military-civilian partnership from a local perspective.

"Our goal is achieve peace through strength," Hegseth said. "By putting America first, that means working with partners and allies throughout the region, reestablishing deterrence and building capabilities right here. These islands are the tip of America's spear in the Pacific.

"I want to be very clear to everyone in this room," Hegseth continued. "... Any attack against these islands is an attack against the U.S. We recognize that, we understand that, and we are committed to that."

Opinion Editorial

Call for a fair course on global shipping energy transition

By Hon. Manasseh Maelanga,
Minister of Infrastructure
Development, Solomon Islands

The ocean has always been central to the life and prosperity of the Solomon Islands, serving as our highway for sustenance, connection, and trade. Our traditions have taught us to respect the sea and navigate in harmony with its rhythms.

However, our ocean is changing due to factors beyond our control. Rising tides, intensifying storms, and saltwater intrusion threaten our very existence. The shipping industry, vital for our access to essential goods, contributes to global warming by emitting growing greenhouse gas emissions. The consequences disproportionately affect vulnerable nations like ours in the Pacific Islands' region.

The Solomon Islands, along with our allies in the 6PAC+ alliance, have long

advocated for a solution. We recognize that finding a solution requires a collective vision, global cooperation and commitments at the International Maritime Organization (IMO). While we stand firm on the need for effective measures to drive a transition to zero emissions, we understand that the path forward will involve careful consideration.

Our priority remains the adoption of a strong and predictable economic measure, such as a universal mandatory levy on greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions from ships. Such a fixed contribution can provide the essential certainty needed to incentivize the significant investments in zero and near-zero emission fuels and efficiency measures.

We believe it is crucial that revenues generated from a maritime GHG emissions pricing mechanism are used to support an effective just and

equitable transition, addressing the needs of vulnerable countries like SIDS and LDCs, including enabling our shipping energy transition and addressing disproportionate negative impacts. If the most vulnerable are left behind, the agreed strategy will not be fulfilled, and greenhouse gas emissions will continue.

We must remain vigilant against any delays that could weaken the ambition of commitments and postpone meaningful action. As the urgency of the climate crisis demands, we must strive for timely progress on adopting effective mid-term measures at the IMO.

As I have stated before, the Solomon Islands strives for self-reliance. Our call for action on shipping emissions is not about aid; it is about ensuring fairness and accountability.

We will continue to advocate for:

- a meaningful carbon levy that compels the shipping industry towards real change and drive a transition to zero shipping emissions.
- a fair mechanism allowing SIDS and LDCs to build a clean shipping future and adapting to the impacts of climate change.
- progress without undue delays, recognizing the urgency of the climate crisis and the need for concrete action.

The Solomon Islands is committed to finding a path forward that ensures a sustainable future for our people and our ocean. We believe that through constructive dialogue and a focus on equitable solutions, we can navigate these rough waters together and achieve a just transition for all. Waiting is not an option, as the costs of inaction are far too great. We must act now to ensure the ocean remains our pathway forward, not the reason we are left behind.

U.S. Coast Guard, partners ensure maritime security in Marianas through increased operations

By Chief Warrant Officer Sara Muir
U.S. Coast Guard Forces Micronesia
/ Sector Guam

March 26, 2025

Santa Rita, Guam--The U.S. Coast Guard Forces Micronesia/Sector Guam (FM/SG) team, alongside partners, conducted a series of operations from March 13 to March 23, 2025, to keep the ports and approaches to Guam and the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands (CNMI) safe and secure while supporting commerce.

“This ten-day snapshot is a window into the continuation and increase of our routine operations to protect U.S. borders by preventing illegal goods entering or activities transpiring in the Marianas. They also support prosperity by keeping trade flowing smoothly. Safe ports mean cruise ships bring visitors, tankers deliver fuel, and cargo vessels supply goods—all vital to our region’s economy,” said Cmdr. Ryan Crose, deputy commander at Forces Micronesia/Sector Guam.

From March 13 to 24, U.S. Coast Guard teams boarded oil tankers and cargo vessels at sea and inspected ships dockside alongside partner agencies. On March 13, a sector boarding team (SBT) and Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) agents, delivered by a Station Apra Harbor small boat, examined the 590-foot Republic of the Marshall Islands-flagged oil tanker Culture off Guam.

On March 19, the Fast Response Cutter USCGC Myrtle Hazard (WPC 1139) crew and SBT members boarded the 472-foot Singapore-flagged cargo ship Kota Raja en route from the Federated States of Micronesia to Guam. On March 23, an SBT and DEA team, again delivered by a Station Apra Harbor small boat, boarded the 607-foot China-flagged oil tanker Chang Hang Xi Wang off Guam, followed by a shoreside exam at Tristar Terminal.

Shoreside, the Forces Micronesia/Sector Guam prevention team,

alongside the Guam Customs and Quarantine Agency, attended vessels for further exams. On March 14, they conducted a port state control exam on the 430-foot French cruise ship Le Jacques Cartier, carrying 116 passengers and 135 crew, at the Port of Guam. On March 23, they conducted a certificate of compliance and port state control exam on the Chang Hang Xi Wang at Tristar Terminal. The teams found all the vessels in compliance with established standards and regulations.

“While these operations are core to our mission, we’ve ramped up their frequency to meet today’s demands,” said Cmdr. Crose. “With increased maritime traffic and evolving regional security challenges, we’re focusing efforts to protect our borders, strengthen partnerships with agencies like the DEA and Guam Customs, and ensure our ports remain safe and open for business—keeping commerce flowing and our communities thriving.”

Security boardings focus on checking for illegal activities, such as drug trafficking or smuggling, and ensuring compliance with U.S. laws. Certificate of compliance exams verify tankers meet safety and environmental standards, like proper oil-handling equipment, spill prevention measures, and documentation compliance. Port state control exams ensure foreign vessels meet international safety, security, and crew welfare standards, including emergency procedures proficiency, lifeboat functionality, and working conditions.

The U.S. Coast Guard Forces Micronesia/Sector Guam team remains dedicated to safeguarding our borders, maritime approaches, and the maritime community while enabling commerce and prosperity through these ongoing operations.



Pacific Island auditors trained on financial audit practice areas

PASAI

March 26, 2025

Auckland, New Zealand—The Pacific Association of Supreme Audit Institutions (PASAI) is delivering a series of webinars covering financial audit practice areas for its members from today.

58 staff (37 female and 21 male) from the government audit offices of Fiji, Federated States of Micronesia (FSM) National office, Nauru, Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands, Tonga and

Tuvalu participated in the remotely accessible capacity building training.

This first webinar of the series is designed to provide participants with essential insights and practical strategies to enhance their audit planning processes.

One of the course facilitators, PASAI Program Director, Susana Lauulu, said the webinar will provide practical tools to help audit offices refine their current processes with help from PASAI’s own regional financial audit manual.

“By increasing understanding about the importance of planning an audit and the key components for effective planning, we aim to enhance the quality of financial audits in the Pacific.

“This webinar will equip staff with the knowledge and tools needed to tackle financial audits whether they are experienced auditors or new to the field,” she said.

Senior Advisor at the Office of the Auditor-General of New Zealand,

Logan Moore, is also facilitating the webinar series, held for about 2 hours each month until June 2026.

Senior Advisor, International team and Audit New Zealand Manager Narisha Poonsamy, shared her experience of Public Sector Entities audit planning.

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