



PRESS RELEASE

Pacific Partnership Returns to Tonga for the First Time in Ten Years



14 November 2023 (Nuku'alofa, Tonga) – The Pacific Partnership mission returned to Tonga for the first time since 2013. The mission is supported by Harpers Ferry-class amphibious dock landing ship USS Pearl Harbor, which also was part of the 2013 mission.

At the invitation of Tonga, Pacific Partnership’s mission is to conduct tailored humanitarian and civic preparedness activities in areas such as engineering, disaster response, public health, and outreach events. The Pacific Partnership began in 2004 as a humanitarian response but over the years, it has transformed into an initiative that promotes interoperability and multinational cooperation through multiple lines of effort to help build regional resilience and capacities of our people to respond to crisis events.

At the official opening ceremony, Mission Commander Capt. Claudine Caluori shared “Pacific Partnership creates lasting bonds of friendship and trust between the United States, mission partners and host nations. She added, “while in Tonga, Pacific Partnership will provide tailored medical care focusing on subject-matter exchanges and community education, conduct repairs at a local schoolhouse, and lead emergency preparedness training covering disaster response and humanitarian assistance”.

“The Pacific Partnership embodies the values of compassion, solidarity, and the understanding that no single nation can tackle these challenges in isolation,” stated Honorable Samiu Vaipulu, Acting Prime Minister for the Kingdom of Tonga. “We are presented with the opportunity to refine our capabilities and test our coordination

approaches. Let us remember that the safety and well-being of our people depend not only on these coordination mechanisms but the genuine trust and care we share about the building resilient communities in the face of many unknowns that are likely to unfold due to the complex and ever-changing risk environment”.

Brad Coley, Chargé d'affaires a.i. of United States Embassy Nuku'alofa notes: "This year has already been an historic one in U.S.-Tongan relations with the opening of U.S. Embassy Nuku'alofa in May, Secretary of State Blinken's visit to Tonga in July, and Prime Minister Hon. Hu'akavameiliku's September travel to Washington for the second U.S.-Pacific Islands Forum Summit at the White House. I'm delighted that we are ending this busy and productive year on a high note with the USS Pearl Harbor visiting Nuku'alofa at the invitation of Tonga and in partnership with His Majesty's Armed Forces. We are looking forward to a busy and fruitful Pacific Partnership stop in Tonga."

Tonga is the last scheduled stop of the 2023 iteration of the Pacific Partnership mission.

ENDS

For more information, or media interviews please contact:

Mr. Mafua Vai'utukakau Maka, Director, NDRMO Tonga, Email: vaiutukakaumaka@gmail.com