

# USCGC Frederick Hatch Supports Partners in Micronesia, Republic of Palau Under Operation Rematau



U.S. Coast Guard Forces Micronesia/Sector Guam, March 14, 2024

SANTA RITA, Guam – The crew of the USCGC Frederick Hatch (WPC 1143) completed a significant operational patrol under Operation Rematau from Feb. 15 to March 4, 2024, reinforcing the U.S. Coast Guard’s commitment to maritime safety, security, and environmental stewardship in the Pacific region.

“Frederick Hatch marked an important milestone in the U.S. Coast Guard’s relationship with our friends in Palau by pioneering the use of the recently signed enhanced bilateral agreement, and we look forward to deepening our ties with Palau’s Marine Law division going forward. The cutter’s first-ever visit to Tinian and participation in Yap Day were both very enjoyable ways to learn about the cultures of our neighboring islands while reflecting our commitment to communities across the Pacific,” said Lt. Patrick Dreiss, commanding officer of USCGC Frederick Hatch.

The Frederick Hatch crew proudly represented the U.S. Coast Guard at the annual Pika Fest Celebration on Tinian, Commonwealth of Northern Mariana Islands, and Yap Day in Colonia, Yap State, the Federated States of Micronesia (FSM).

Supporting local needs, they transported 1,500 lbs. of non-

perishable food, 1,200 lbs. of water, and essential supplies, including fishing gear and tools, to Ulithi Atoll, FSM, during a state-declared emergency drought. The crew renewed the meaningful connection with the local community, engaging in direct support and sharing in the generosity and warmth of the island's residents.

"The opportunity to contribute to the enduring partnership between the Ulithi community and the U.S. Coast Guard, rooted in World War II and grown throughout decades of collaboration, was a special experience for myself and the crew. Thank you to the local non-profit organizations we worked alongside, as the experience of supporting and visiting the people of Ulithi is one of the highlights of my career," said Dreiss.

Further showcasing the spirit of cooperation and support, the Hatch's crew organized a donation drive prior to sailing, collecting 40 bags of school supplies and clothing from the U.S. Coast Guard community in Guam and collaborated with the Ayuda Foundation and the Ulithi-based One People One Reef research foundation to facilitate these critical donations to the island.

"Today exemplifies the spirit of teamwork and camaraderie that we hold dear here in Ulithi. It warms our hearts to hear that your short visit to our island was enjoyable, and we're delighted that you appreciated the coconuts, bananas, and flowers. Knowing that the bananas are adorning your ship's canopy, and the flowers are being proudly worn by your crew fills us with immense joy," said Ulithi Mayor John Rulmal.

Yap Day, observed annually on March 1, is a significant cultural and legal holiday in Yap State, one of the four states of the FSM. Established in 1968 and renamed in 1979, it celebrates Yapese culture, highlighting traditional skills and competitions, such as tattooing, fresh produce contests, and traditional games. The U.S. Coast Guard regularly attends, and

the 2024 celebration was particularly special as Petty Officer 2nd Class Eugene Hališlius, a native of Yap currently stationed in Guam, returned home aboard Frederick Hatch for the first time in years to participate, further symbolizing the deep connections between the U.S. Coast Guard and the Pacific communities served.

“Returning to Yap, I’m reminded of the values instilled in me: respect, humility, and the identity of being an islander. Coming from a family of navigators, we believe in the power of knowing your waypoints, a principle that guides us to success. Inspired by my brother Ken Raigeluw, who is also serving and driven by our service’s unique opportunities and missions, this journey not only contributes to our collective mission but also my personal growth and family legacy,” said Hališlius.

The Frederick Hatch crew responded to a request from the government of Yap State for a U.S. Coast Guard presence near Ngulu Atoll to deter illegal sea cucumber poaching, demonstrating a commitment to protecting the region’s marine resources and aiding partners. This patrol also marked the first-ever boarding under the Palau enhanced bilateral agreement, signed in August 2023, authorizing U.S. Coast Guard boarding officers to conduct boardings in Palau’s exclusive economic zone (EEZ) on the country’s behalf without a Palauan officer present. While the crew found everything compliant with international and Palauan requirements, the action set a precedent for further regional maritime law enforcement cooperation. It reinforces the trust and confidence of partners in the U.S. Coast Guard’s role to ensure compliance with fishing regulations within partner EEZs.

The patrol also emphasized the need for continued vigilance in the Western Pacific. Not for the first time, the Frederick Hatch crew identified areas of concern for illegal fishing activities and non-compliance with maritime regulations

wherein fishing vessels were observed not transmitting on AIS or VMS near the Palau EEZ border with the high seas.

“These efforts not only affirm our dedication to preserving the region’s marine biodiversity but also reinforce the strong and enduring partnerships we have, particularly in support of our Compact of Free Association partners addressing shared security challenges and advancing mutual interests in the Blue Pacific,” said Capt. Nick Simmons, commander of U.S. Coast Guard Forces Micronesia/Sector Guam. “Our partnership with local non-profits and the community in Guam exemplifies a holistic approach to strengthening the fabric of trust and mutual respect we’ve built over decades with Pacific Island communities and beyond as we face future challenges and opportunities together.”

#### **About Operation Rematau**

Operation Rematau is how U.S. Coast Guard Forces Micronesia/Sector Guam supports the overarching Coast Guard endeavor Operation Blue Pacific to promote security, safety, sovereignty, and economic prosperity in Oceania. Rematau means people of the deep sea. It reinforces the U.S. commitment to working together to advance Pacific regionalism based on the Blue Pacific narrative. This action supports U.S. national security objectives, bolstering regional maritime good governance and security.

#### **About USCGC Frederick Hatch**

The Frederick Hatch is the 43rd 154-foot Sentinel-class fast response cutter named for a surfman and lighthouse keeper who was a two-time Gold Life Saving Medal recipient. Designed for many missions, including search and rescue, national defense, and maritime law enforcement, the Frederick Hatch crew plays a significant role in safeguarding national interests and preserving good maritime governance.