



National Security and Climate Change

Pacific ALLIES Internship, Marshall Islands & UH Manoa

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Abstract

The goal of the Pacific ALLIES internship is to prepare next generation leaders for challenges they will face in the 21st century. It encompasses bringing cadets, midshipmen and college students together to understand the effects of climate change on national security. This internship utilizes Kwajalein Atoll as a living laboratory.

The Marshall Islands is strategically important to the United States due to its central location in the Pacific Ocean. Due rising sea levels, the Marshall Islands are at a high risk of coastal flooding. Erosion may leave the islands uninhabitable soon. This internship consists of preparation and meetings at UH Manoa, and then a month spent in RMI working with high school students and the community. This year the focuses were completing Google street view of the island of Ebeye and conducting a demographic survey with the students and in conjunction with the disaster planning for the local government.

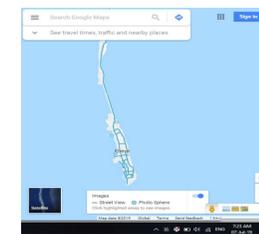
The demographic survey and Google street view created baseline information for disaster preparedness as the threat of inundation of RMI increases. Through these projects, we were able to work with the local community and forge relationships built on trust in the Pacific. .

Background

- The Republic of the Marshall Islands are part of the Compact of Free Association (COFA), along with Palau and Micronesia. COFA is an agreement between the U.S. and these countries that allows the U.S. certain strategic rights while providing the citizens of these countries employment and educational opportunities as well as provide compensation for the devastating loss of life that came forth from the U.S. nuclear weapons testing in the region. The funding is set to expire in 2023 and the current uncertainty of the situation makes this internship important. As there remains much to do in the region. Before the 2023 date, it is important to get the RMI to be self-sufficient economically and educationally.
- Ebeye is one of the most densely populated islands in RMI with about 12,000 people, although it is only 87 acres with a mean elevation of 2 meters. It is an island located in Kwajalein Atoll, which is the largest atoll in the Marshall Islands and the world.
- Through this internship, connections are made between interns and the communities of Ebeye. Much of the internship is revolved around the Spartan Summer camp, which is a month-long camp for Marshallese high school students. This camp was created by Jelton Anjain to advance Marshall Islands youth in STEM subjects. We were able to work closely with the students through helping the marine science teacher from Hawaii at the camp, Kara Miller, and run our own projects with the students: the demographic survey and Google street view. Disaster preparedness is imperative through these projects we were able to both engage the students and work with the local government.
- As many of the students of the camp are children or traditional and democratic leaders of the nation, this internship connects the future leaders of the U.S. with the future leaders of the Marshall Islands.

A day in the life

- One week was spent at UH Manoa in order to meet the Pacific ALLIES team, Coast Guard District 14, and US NDOPACOM prior to departing to RMI. Most of this week consisted of planning projects that would be undertaken while in the Marshall Islands, as well as contacting points of contact on the island. After arriving in the Marshall Islands, a month was spent conducting disaster preparedness with the local government and high school students at a summer camp. A demographic survey and Google street view of the island was conducted with the students. A final week was spent at UH Manoa once again to brief CG D14 and US INDOPACOM, along with the Center for Excellence in Disaster Management and Humanitarian Assistance.
- Much of the time spent while we were in RMI was at Gueguegee, an island where the Spartan Summer Camp was held. Daily routines were dependent upon whether we would be teaching students how to create a Google Street View or if we were planning on conducting a demographic survey. After breakfast with the students, mornings were used to meet with government officials or prepare Google Street View lessons for the afternoon. If a demographic surveys was scheduled, both the morning and afternoon were utilized. While mornings were generally reserved for students to attend academic classes, the afternoons were filled with Marine Science activities, snorkeling, sports, and traditional weaving and fishing.



Opportunities:

From this internship, we were able to...

- Establish relations with the host nation
- Interact with local high school students and introduce them to the Coast Guard
- Work with a foreign exchange Naval Academy Cadet from Singapore and recent graduate from Whitman College
- Meet the US Ambassador and Japanese Ambassador
- Attend a party hosted by the royal family
- Brief US INDOPACOM, CG D14, and the Center for Excellence
- Collaborate with Pacific ALLIES, Pacific Resources for Education and Learning (PREL), and UH Manoa

Discussion and Conclusions

- Continuing connections with CG District 14 and PACOM can further increase their interest in the region and help the Marshallese navigate through climate change.
- Developing further friendship with the Marshallese will benefit US-RMI relations and increase trust in the Pacific.
- Continuing the demographic survey and working further with the local government will increase disaster preparedness in the region.
- Additional Google street view will help archive the effects and rate of erosion on the island over time.
- There is much room for further marine science research, especially revolving around coral reef health and issues such as coral reef bleaching or the loss of coral reef environments in the region.

Acknowledgements

- Greg Nakano has made this internship possible. His tireless work and creative vision for Pacific ALLIES of connecting communities allow for this successful collaboration.
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