



THE SHIELD

THE PREMIER NEWSLETTER OF THE 38G COMMUNITY

COMBATING HUMAN TRAFFICKING IN PALAU THROUGH WPS

LTC Ed Riffle, 38G/4D Laws, Regulations, and Policies Officer, 351 CACOM



Attendees of the Combat Trafficking in Persons (CTIP) Training.

Civil Affairs, more than most branches within the Army, and the 38G program in particular, presents opportunities to partner with other nations to build that partner nation's (PNs) capacity to defend itself and thrive in the international community. With its myriad of subject matter experts (SMEs), the 38G program offers an ability to mentor government officials from those PNs with skill sets that are often more civilian in nature than military.

An example of this can be found in the 351st Civil Affair Command's (351 CACOM) Government Function Specialty Team (FxSP), and its capacity building with PNs throughout the U.S. Indo-Pacific Command's (INDOPACOM) area of responsibility (AoR). This is particularly the case with the COFA nations (Compacts of Free Association) in Micronesia: Republic of Palau, Republic of Marshall Islands, and the Federated States of Micronesia. These three independent nations were 'trust territories' of the United States from just after WW2 to the mid-1990s, when they became independent nations. Though independent, the COFA nations maintain strong bonds with the U.S. and share our military services (their military is our military, their citizens can and do serve in our military services – at a higher enlistment rate than any state in the Union, and from WW2 to the modern day, many COFA service members have made the ultimate sacrifice in defense of our nations).

The 351 FxSP's "Team Palau", which includes LTC Ed Riffle (38G/4D Laws, Regulations and Policies), MAJ Shawn Sant (38G/4G Judiciary and Legal System), CPT Ben Lion and SSG (now CPT) Anthony Roe (both are 38G/6D Education), recently completed another mission to Palau.





THE SHIELD

THE PREMIER NEWSLETTER OF THE 38G COMMUNITY

This mission was a part of their ongoing and enduring support of Palau's efforts to combat trafficking in persons (CTIP), a problem endemic throughout the world, that threatens both personal freedom and national security, and often is used by adversaries to destabilize other nations. These CTIP missions are nested within and funded by INDOPACOM's Women, Peace & Security (WPS) program.

The 10-day mission beginning in April 2024 involved training various agencies within Palau's Ministries of Justice and Education, and included the Bureau of Public Safety (local law enforcement), the Anti-Human Trafficking Unit, and the Divisions of Labor and Human Services, which took place primarily in Palau's largest city, Koror. While previous training sessions by Team Palau provided detailed prosecutor training, this time the focus was on equipping law enforcement, teachers, and school administrators with tools to identify and assist victims of human trafficking and gather evidence for prosecution. Specific tools included techniques for identifying potential victims (who often conceal their victim status), building trust and rapport with victims, and avoiding actions that might undermine trust. The training incorporated scenarios and providing positive feedback and constructive criticism. Additionally, Team Palau provided guidance on gathering evidence according to U.S. law enforcement standards, as human trafficking cases may involve individuals traveling through U.S. territories and potentially leading to prosecutions in U.S. courts.

Team Palau also travelled to the national capitol in Melekeok to meet with the Chief Justice of the Palau Supreme Court and other officials. Discussions focused on the challenges human trafficking poses to the Palau legal system, including a lack of experience in prosecuting such crimes and concerns about personal safety and potential financial repercussions.



Chief Justice of the Palau Supreme Court.

Team Palau returned to the U.S., but their support for Palau does not end there. As in the past, they continue to provide support state-side, providing research, feedback and guidance from the U.S., including assistance in identifying non-military individuals who are interested in mentoring and advising Palau remotely or in-country. This ongoing support includes connecting Palau with U.S. prosecutors, particularly those from district attorney's offices open to collaborating with foreign prosecuting agencies, and retired judges willing to offer their expertise to partner nations.

If you have a skill set that could be used to support CTIP efforts and are interested in working with the 351 CACOM's FxSP, please contact LTC Riffle at edward.j.riffle4.mil@army.mil.

