

A New Army Task Force in Oceania



By Staff Sgt. Solomon Navarro October 21, 2020

Task Force Oceania (TF Oceania) consists of Soldiers from all components of the U.S. Army; active-duty, Army Reserve and National Guard, with the purpose of engaging and cultivating meaningful and lasting relationships in Oceania.

Oceania is an area of the Pacific that includes Australia and neighboring Pacific island countries.

TF Oceania is headquartered at Fort Shafter Flats, Hawaii, and consists of 10 two-Soldier country teams that will provide continuous presence on 10 Pacific islands. "There are eight island countries to include Timor-Leste, Vanuatu, Tonga, Fiji, Samoa, Palau, Papua New Guinea and the Federated States of Micronesia including Pohnpei, Kosrae, and Yap," said Lt. Col Igor Dubinsky, TF Oceania deputy commander.

“The original intent of having civil affairs-trained Soldiers deploy to these countries was to work with the civilian population to collaborate and develop solutions to the specific issues these nations are dealing with, said Dubinsky. “However, from the time the task force was conceived to present-day, the world has been drastically changed due to the COVID-19 global pandemic. With this change, so has our engagement strategy.”

The countries that call Oceania home may be small, but hold significant strategic importance for the U.S. and its allies in the region, said Dubinsky.

The two-soldier country teams are Civil Affairs trained and will work with the State Department and host-nation governments to execute senior leader engagements and facilitate exercises, conferences, humanitarian assistance and disaster response planning.

“U.S. Indo-Pacific Command is using a whole of government approach in designing, reviewing, and implementing Overseas Humanitarian, Disaster, and Civic Aid funded minimum cost projects. To date they have completed 204 projects worth \$17.4M. These and future projects will provide medical supplies, hand washing stations, generators, tents to house medical supplies, portable toilets and cleaning supplies,” said Dubinsky.

For Col. Blaise Zandoli, TF Oceania commander, the reasons for being in Oceania are many but the most important is the human-to-human connection around shared values.

“The U.S. has strong historical ties with Oceania dating to at least WWII. These countries share fundamental values around democracy and a spiritual approach to human existence that embeds respect for the individual within a strong social context. Our shared values and mutually beneficial practical connections make the partnership between the U.S. and Pacific Island countries a natural fit,” explained Zandoli.

Task Force Oceania demonstrates how the Army remains committed to our global partners and ready for any challenge. Protective measures to mitigate the spread of COVID-19 are being taken to operate in the region.

https://www.army.mil/article/240184/a_new_army_task_force_in_oceania