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## **U.S. Indo-Pacific Command Representatives Host Republic of Palau President for Joint Committee Meeting**

**ASAN, Guam (May 14, 2021)** – Senior military leaders from U.S. Indo-Pacific Command (INDOPACOM) hosted a Joint Committee Meeting (JCM) featuring the President of the Republic of Palau, U.S. Department of State leadership, and federal agency representatives in Guam, May 11-12.

President Surangel Whipps, Jr. and several cabinet members joined John Hennessey-Niland, U.S. Ambassador to the Republic of Palau, Brig. Gen. Jennifer Short, deputy director for INDOPACOM's Strategic Planning and Policy Directorate, and Rear Adm. John Menoni, Joint Region Marianas commander and INDOPACOM's senior military official for the Republic of Palau, in the meeting to discuss relations and priorities between the two countries.

JCMs are a critical component of the Compact of Free Association between the Republic of Palau and the U.S. The semi-annual meetings allow Palauan leadership and U.S. military and federal partners to discuss a range of topics including regional security and defense matters and joint-use construction and training opportunities.

Ambassador Hennessey-Niland reflected on the importance of the joint meeting between partner nations and how periodic coordination touchpoints result in successful bilateral cooperation. "The JCM meeting was successful as there was positive discussion on future projects for Palau. These efforts signify the continuing partnership that we have with our ally, Palau," said Hennessey-Niland.

Due to the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, no JCM meetings were held in 2020. However, Menoni highlighted the importance of the Republic of Palau and U.S. working together to resume normal JCM scheduling, stating, "It is critical that we hold these meetings regularly to ensure we are maximizing our combined efforts to preserve the security and prosperity of our two nations, while also doing our part to ensure a free and open Indo-Pacific."

Menoni added, "The Republic of Palau, under the leadership of President Whipps, continues to do a phenomenal job in their management of the COVID-19 pandemic. They have successfully kept their islands COVID free, with no lapse in their dedicated support of DoD operations and exercises over the past year and a half."

Following completion of the latest JCM and a review of action items, Republic of Palau leadership and U.S. counterparts are slated to collaborate to determine the optimal date and location to convene the next periodic meeting.

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