



Embassy of the United States of America Kolonia

Public Affairs Section
P.O. Box 1286
Kolonia, Pohnpei, FM 96941
Telephone: (691) 320-2187
Fax: (691) 320-2186
Email: usembassy@mail.fm

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Ambassador's Independence Day Address Stresses Defense of Core Values, Encourages Dialogue on Compact Implementation

During an official ceremony at the U.S. Residence on July 4, Ambassador Miriam K. Hughes toasted the founding values that have driven progress and opportunity in the United States ever since the words of the Declaration of Independence rang out from Philadelphia on July 4, 1776. The ideals of freedom, democracy and equality of opportunity “are just as fundamental, useful and compelling today,” as they were 232 years ago, she said. President Abraham Lincoln’s commitment to “Government of the people, by the people and for the people” embodies the conceptual pillars of democratic practices that continue to inspire Americans and Micronesians.

Ambassador Hughes underscored a renewed U.S. commitment across the board to generous and transparent partnership with the Federated States of Micronesia. She cited the construction of a new U.S. Embassy on a gracious compound in the heart of Kolonia as a personification of “the quality of our long-term commitment.” The Embassy coordinates the work of some 30 U.S. Government agencies. Emphasizing the importance of vigorous debate and freedom of expression, Ambassador Hughes said she had “... urged the FSM Government to engage in frank and creative dialogue with us on ways to make the Amended Compact work better, for which we share joint responsibility.”

While the Fourth of July reception was necessarily modest in size this year, the Embassy appreciated the participation of FSM Government and Pohnpei State officials, resident Americans, as well as representatives of the media and diplomatic corps. President Emanuel Mori kindly took time from his busy schedule to remain throughout the event. The Embassy hopes to be able to organize a larger event next year. Ambassador Hughes’s Fourth of July remarks follow as delivered.



*Ambassador Hughes
Delivers Her Remarks*



*FSM President Mori (third from right)
Joins Other Guests at the U.S. Residence*



*FSM President Mori Joins in
a Toast to the Fourth of July*

**For further information contact the U.S. Embassy
at (691) 320-2187 or usembassy@mail.fm**

Fourth of July Remarks - 2008

By Miriam K. Hughes
U.S. Ambassador to the
Federated States of Micronesia
(July 4, 2008, U.S. Embassy Residence, Nanpohnmal, Pohnpei, FSM)

Two hundred thirty-two years ago, a few brave, emerging leaders from 13 separate British colonies, along what is today the east coast of my nation, decided that they needed a written declaration of their independence. Revolutionary war had already begun the previous year – 1775 – in a colony called Massachusetts. It was after the war had begun, that Thomas Jefferson, who was at a meeting in Philadelphia, wrote the Declaration of Independence. On July 4, 1776, the colonies announced their decision to leave the British Empire; they dared to demand the same rights as Englishmen.

In the Declaration of Independence, Thomas Jefferson wrote that all people are created equal, and that our Creator conferred on each one of us unalienable rights. Among them are the right to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness. Democracies, wherever they may be and whatever traditional cultures they may embody, rest upon this irreducible principle: governments exist to serve the people.

The Declaration of Independence became one of the most famous documents in history. Its words inspired Europeans and others who were battling privilege, nepotism and autocratic government. We hope these principles continue to inspire you in the Federated States of Micronesia, as they do all Americans.

The enduring power of America's founding ideals – particularly, that all people are created equal – remains compelling today, representing a universal hope. As Americans, we are thankful for the backbone values of tolerance, freedom of expression and worship, and compromise, which have molded our productive and pluralistic society. None of this came easily. It was not just about materialism and money. Our values cost us dearly.

The Revolutionary War lasted eight years, until 1783. Our young patriots fought barefoot in the snow often clothed in rags and bearing primitive muskets. They faced rank after rank of immaculately arrayed and heavily armed royal British forces. The valor of George Washington and our homegrown militias is almost impossible to imagine. They drew inspiration from the Declaration of Independence. This is what we continue to believe in: the dignity and rights of every person; equal justice; and as President Abraham Lincoln declared, "Government of the people, by the people, and for the people." While anchored in these bedrock ideas, democracy also consists of practices and procedures. In the United States, our system was molded through a long, often tortuous history.

The principle of equal rights contained in the Declaration of Independence made slavery increasingly objectionable and finally unacceptable in the United States. In 1865, we achieved a historic milestone, with the enactment of an amendment to our Constitution – Amendment 13 – which abolished slavery. It was not until 1920, that Amendment 19 guaranteed the right of American women to vote. So it took time. The institutionalization and defense of our values has required grassroots mobilization, strategic compromise, freedom of expression and sometimes, gut-wrenching human sacrifice. America has paid the price, including on the beaches and high in the cliffs of the Pacific.

We did not advance through back room politics or quick infusions of cash. Progress and unity as a nation came rather from the hard, daily struggle to make good laws, build democratic institutions, resolve differences peacefully, and share power justly. Economic development depended upon an enabling legal architecture, as well as educational preparation, and the active participation of our citizens. We worked toward a stable regulatory environment, sound systems of taxation and cooperation among states for the common good, which helped unleash creativity in every field of human endeavor.

It is vital to American interests today that sovereign nations, in accordance with their particular circumstances and traditions, meet the basic needs of their people. The United States is committed across the board to generous and transparent partnership with the FSM. The construction of a new U.S. Embassy on a gracious compound in the heart of Kolonia personifies the quality of our long-term commitment. Our Embassy is a platform and a headquarters for the work of some 30 U.S. Government agencies. Each in its own way has extended a hand to Micronesians.

Just in the past month, for example, our small U.S. Embassy has: engaged the FBI to deliver workshops on white collar crime; welcomed doctors from the Centers for Disease Control to share their expertise on multi-drug resistant tuberculosis; transmitted a framework airport security agreement from the Transportation Security Administration; with the Department of the Interior, initiated a \$3 million grant to repair health and education facilities in all four FSM states; demonstrated a new Internet link for private sector networking; worked intensely to prepare for the arrival later this summer of the biggest U.S. Naval hospital ship in the world; and urged the FSM Government to engage in frank and creative dialogue with us on ways to make the Amended Compact work better, for which we share joint responsibility.

We are aware that none of these and our many other programs and initiatives come easily. It is not the way of Uncle Sam or our Founding Fathers to hand out gifts on sterling platters. America was not made that way. During that hot summer in Philadelphia more than 230 years ago, from our desperate fight for independence to the darkest days of a civil war, to the hard-fought battles of the 20th century, there were many chances to lose our heart, our nerve, or our way. But Americans held firm to their founding values. With the approach of U.S. Presidential elections, we are now engaged in vigorous and open public debate in all 50 states and the District of Columbia.

As the FSM also struggles at this pivotal time to overcome internal and global challenges, please know that your American partners understand because we have and will continue to face similar problems. Our engagement is multifaceted, relevant, and historically profound. Some of the Americans who are here today have chosen to make their homes with you and to dedicate their talents to your country. I wish we could have invited every American in Pohnpei and Micronesia to this reception, but unfortunately our resources don't stretch that far this year. In the United States, July Fourth is a day of picnics, parades and fireworks at night.

But I am happy to be here with you, despite a lot of rainy weather, because you have made me feel welcome and useful, enabling me to demonstrate the truths that America stands for, particularly freedom of expression, justice and the unalienable equality of all men and women. In the 21st century, we have rededicated ourselves as a force for life and a force for good, especially in the Federated States of Micronesia.