

Cleo Paskal's Post



Cleo Paskal
Just reporting.
1h · Edited



Runway groundbreaking ceremony by Chinese company today on Woleai, Yap, Federated States of Micronesia. FSM President Simina was in attendance. This is a Japanese WWII era runway, 670 km from Guam. The runway became unusable due to deterioration. Even the intrepid Pacific Mission Aviation - that used to service Woleai and performs free medevacs - was finding it often impossible to land. Without a runway locals must travel 3-4 days by infrequent boat to reach the closest runway. Those on islands further out must travel even longer. This has major implications for health, education, business development, etc.

As [United States Department of Defense](#) announces \$2 billion in investments in the main island of Yap State (also called Yap), the outer islands are being left out. That includes Woleai, and Ulithi Atoll. In late 1944 and 1945 Naval Base Ulithi was the largest naval base in the world, with up to 600 ships sheltered there. In honor of those ties, the Navy used to send high level delegations (including Admirals and the Navy band) to one of the most important events on the atoll - the high school graduation (if you were there, please DM me or comment below). Outer Islands High School is known to be very good. Students come from all over the Outer Islands, traveling for days by boat and boarding at Ulithi, to study there. This year's graduating class was almost all Honor Roll.

The President of FSM came for the outer Islands High School graduation on May 22nd. There was no one from the Navy, or from the rest of the U.S. government in attendance. There was an American though. The President was the opening speaker for the main address, given by Amos Collins, Chief Pilot of Pacific Mission Aviation (PMA). There are Americans who know and care about Yap State - and who are warmly respected by locals. Might be helpful if those in DC, Hawaii and Guam spoke to them a bit more about what is really needed, and what works, in Yap (and beyond).

FSM is a Compact of Free Association country that sends a high number of its sons and daughters to serve in the U.S. military, and where all too many Americans died during World War II proving its strategic importance. But getting to the groundbreaking of the Woleai runway reconstruction was only possible by traveling for four days on a transport ship from Yap - a ship provided by China Aid. The President arrived on a patrol boat provided by Australia. The U.S. was nowhere to be seen.

Tomorrow is Woleai's high school graduation. Don't expect to see any U.S. government representatives there either. The Chinese will be there though. Showing up is (more than) half the battle.



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