

Chargé d’Affaires Daniel Tarapacki
Remarks
Welcome Reception, U.S. Embassy Residence
September 12, 2024

Faafetai Chaplain Lt Col (Todd) Brown for the thoughtful word of encouragement.

Your Highnesses, Head of State and Masiofo
Your Excellency, Council of Deputies and your good lady
Honorable Deputy Prime Minister and Honorable Cabinet Members
Honorable Chief Justice and the Judiciary
Honorable Speaker of Parliament
Honorable Members of Parliament
Members of the Diplomatic Corps,
Members of the Media,
Ladies and gentlemen,

Talofa lava and good evening,

It is truly a pleasure to stand before you this evening in the stunning backdrop of Samoa. The natural beauty of these islands, with their crystal-clear waters and lush landscapes, is a constant reminder of the vibrant culture and spirit that fills this land. I am honored to be here among you and to feel the warmth of your hospitality.

Each day since my arrival I am continuously encouraged by the joy, hope, and talent in Samoa. If I’m being completely honest, I wish could sing, dance, and play sports half as well as everyone here! That said, these are very important skills I hope to improve upon during my time in Samoa. In terms of my background, I originally hail from a small town outside of Buffalo, New York and have served three overseas assignments, as well as three assignments in Washington, where I most recently served in the Secretary of State’s Operations Center. This is my first assignment in the Pacific and I am deeply grateful for this opportunity.

Tonight, I would like to take a moment to introduce you to our newly expanded leadership team. First, join me in a round of applause to welcome our most recently arrived officer, our emcee

Laila Gillam. Laila joined us last week as our first-ever Public Affairs Officer. Laila has more than 19 years' experience as a diplomat and most recently served as Public Affairs Officer in Dhahran, Saudi Arabia. She is originally from Colorado.

Many of you already know him, but for those who do not, I'd also like to introduce you to our Political/Economic Affairs Chief Donald Alderman. Donald arrived in Samoa three months ago. He is also a highly experienced diplomat working on Asia and Pacific issues and has served in Germany, China, Nigeria and South Africa. Donald is originally from Alaska.

As our office continues to expand, so too will our programs and collaborations here in Samoa. Together, we can explore new opportunities and creative solutions that directly benefit the community, ensuring that our engagement is meaningful and impactful.

Building on the incredible work of my predecessors, my primary aim is to further enhance the relationships we have cultivated, create new relations and to continue expanding upon the core principles that have guided us over the years.

The last several years the U.S. administration has worked to broaden and deepen its engagement with Pacific Island countries as a priority of U.S. foreign policy. As a Pacific nation, the United States has a clear and abiding interest in partnering with Samoa to advance a shared agenda: addressing the climate crisis, maintaining peaceful waterways and upholding freedom of navigation, promoting development and economic growth, and deepening people-to-people ties.

Regionally, in the past three and a half years, the United States has hosted two historic Pacific Islands Forum Summits at the White House; opened three new embassies in Solomon Islands, Tonga, and Vanuatu; released the first ever U.S.-Pacific Partnership Strategy; and announced plans, working with Congress, to provide over \$8 billion in new funding for the Pacific Islands. The United States recognized Cook Islands and Niue as sovereign and independent states and established diplomatic relationships with them; expanded USAID offices in Papua New Guinea and Fiji; returned the Peace Corps to Samoa, Fiji, Tonga, and Vanuatu; and increased the availability of U.S. consular services to enable easier travel. We have surged Coast Guard resources to help safeguard maritime territories against illegal, unreported, and unregulated fishing; launched National Guard State Partnership Programs with Samoa and Papua New Guinea;

and tended to tens of thousands of medical patients during missions by the hospital ship USNS Mercy.

We are committed to increasing our assistance in key areas such as health through initiatives like Soifua Manuia returning next month, and I am particularly excited about enhancing our exchange programs like our International Visitor Leadership Program. We hope to increase collaborations through our State Partnership Program, as evident in the Prisons and Corrections subject matter exchange that was held this week by the amazing team from the Nevada National Guard. Can my colleagues from the National Guard raise your hands – welcome and thank you!

One newest initiative just announced at the Pacific Islands Forum Leaders Meeting in Tonga is a funding opportunity called the Pacific Ambassadors' Self-Help Small Grants fund, which will provide grants to local organizations to fund programs that address the impacts of climate change on the environment.

These are a few of the initiatives that not only strengthen our ties but also enrich the lives of those we serve.

Your commitment and dedication will undoubtedly pave the way for further successes as we all work together towards our shared goals. This new chapter comes with exciting opportunities, and I look forward to collaborating with each of you.

Thank you all for being here tonight. I look forward to working closely with each of you as we embark on this journey together. Let us celebrate the beauty of Samoa and the potential of our partnership as we move forward.

Fa'afetai lava! Thank you.

Now join me in raising your glasses to toast the continued friendship and partnership between the United States and Samoa.