



High-level US delegation to visit Pacific islands, excluding Fiji

By Online Editor

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Kurt Campbell, the top U.S diplomat for Pacific affairs,

Senior US civilian and military officials will travel next week to the Pacific islands to discuss environmental, economic and other issues, the State Department said Thursday.

It said Kurt Campbell, the top diplomat for Pacific affairs, and Pacific Fleet Commander Admiral Patrick will visit Kiribati, Samoa, Tonga, the Solomon Islands, Papua New Guinea, Palau, Micronesia and the Marshall Islands.

“This unprecedented high-level trip demonstrates the United States enduring strategic commitment to the region,” the State Department said in a statement.

It also “underscores the whole-of-government approach to enhancing our bilateral political, economic, and security relations in the Pacific,” it added.

The delegation will also seek to enhance the “US role and support for the Pacific Island Forum, and steps that the US can take to enhance opportunities for American businesses seeking to invest in the Pacific,” it said.

The top officials will arrive in Kiribati on June 27 for talks with President Anote Tong and other senior officials about climate change, economic development and other issues, it said.

Recrossing the international dateline, the team will visit Samoa on June 26 and meet Prime Minister Tuilaepa Sailele Malielegaoi and other senior officials to discuss regional environmental programs.

“They will also meet private sector members and civil society representatives,” it said.

On June 28, the delegation will visit Tonga for meetings with King George Tupou V, the Prime Minister, Lord Tu’ivakano, and other senior officials, recognizing the "important contribution" of Royal Tongan Marines in Afghanistan.

In a June 29 visit to the Solomon Islands, the delegation will meet Prime Minister Danny Philip and Foreign Ministry officials about "current issues" involving two countries.

The same day, the group will arrive in Papua New Guinea for discussions with Acting Prime Minister Samuel Abal and Foreign Minister Ano Pala about the country's role in international and Pacific fora.

“The delegation will also meet with American business officials who play an important part in the development of PNG’s energy sector,” it said.

On June 30, it will travel to Palau to meet President Johnson Toribiong and his senior officials to discuss climate change and development issues as well as meet with civil society and business representatives.

On July 1, the delegation will visit the Federated States of Micronesia for talks with President Emanuel Mori and civil society groups.

The State Department said the group will travel the same day to the Republic of the Marshall Islands where they will meet with senior leaders and members of civil society about economic developments, climate change, and other issues.

The delegation returns to Washington July 2.

SOURCE: AFP/PACNEWS