



# Pacific Newsbytes

## Pacific Partners News Briefs

### Telecom News from the Pacific Islands

## PRELStar and PEACESAT Initiate New Program

Video Teleconferencing for distance learning, training, and student exchanges becoming a reality

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In 1997, the Pacific Resources for Education and Learning (PREL) and its Pacific Island educational partners began a five-year PRELStar program funded by the U.S. Department of Education Star Schools program.

An element of this program has been to work with the Pacific Island entities to build an infrastructure to support distance learning, training, Internet access, and student exchanges.

This year, in partnership with the Pan-Pacific Education and Communication Experiments by Satellite (PEACESAT), the PRELStar is deploying video teleconferencing capabilities and Internet access to a service region that is over 4.9 million square miles. The service region includes:

- Hawaii (21.45N, 158W)
- American Samoa (14.158S, 170.41W)
- Republic of the Marshall Islands (RMI) (7N, 171.25E)
- Federated States of Micronesia (FSM) - Kosrae (5.2N, 163.01E)
- FSM - Pohnpei (6.5N, 158.15E)
- FSM - Chuuk (7.25N, 151.45E)
- FSM - Yap (9.4N, 138.1E)
- Guam (13.3N, 144.45E)
- Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands (CNMI) (14.3N, 145.3E)
- Republic of Palau (7.3N, 134.3E)



PRELStar and PEACESAT have initiated the roll-out of these capabilities using the new, but old, GOES-7 satellite that was recently activated by PEACESAT. Although tests and demonstrations of the video teleconferencing capabilities of "Digital PEACESAT" were conducted in 1996 in Hawaii and 1997 in the Pacific, lack of funding prevented sites in the Pacific from having video teleconferencing capabilities. Digital PEACESAT expands the services that are provided by PEACESAT from voice to voice, data, and compressed video.

PRELStar has provided funding for video teleconferencing systems for each of the Western Pacific entities and has funded, in part, the upgrades for the earth stations in the jurisdictions. Funding from a grant to the University of Guam PEACESAT and PEACESAT headquarters in Honolulu have also assisted in this process.

The first site that has been activated for use of this video teleconferencing capability is the Ministry of Education in the Republic of Palau. The Palau video teleconferencing site is a new building and the PEACESAT earth station was moved by the Palau High School to the roof top of the new building. The University of Guam PEACESAT Program moved the earth station to the rooftop of the building. Palau was activated with a video teleconference involving the PREL offices in downtown Honolulu, the PEACESAT/Telecommunications and Information Policy Group at the University of Hawaii, and the Shriners Hospital for Children in Honolulu.

The Palau/PREL/PEACESAT video teleconferencing site can be bridged to other sites in the PEACESAT network and can also be linked with three other sites within Palau through on-island ISDN-based video teleconferencing. Video teleconferencing with the other Pacific Island jurisdictions will be activated by the end of this year.

Some of the key individuals involved with implementing this roll-out in Palau include Bruce Best (University of Guam PEACESAT Program), Christina Higa (Telecommunications and Information Policy Group, Social Science Research Institute, University of Hawaii), Jay Zhargami of PEACESAT Honolulu, and Edwel Ongtung from the Department of Education in Palau. With digital video and the Internet, the combination of information sources, audiences, and instructional courses are limited only by the bandwidth, and that is limited only by funding and creative planning.