

**ISLAND SECURITY POLICY INSTITUTE**

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**COMMENTARY**

# Climate Security and Island Public Safety

*How Climate Change Is Actively Reshaping Pacific and Coastal Island Communities*

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The Republic of Kiribati has purchased land in Fiji in preparation for national relocation.<sup>1</sup> The Marshall Islands' capital, Majuro, regularly floods during high tide events. Hawaii's coastal road infrastructure faces documented deterioration from sea level rise and storm surge intensification. Climate change is not a future risk for Pacific Island and coastal communities. It is a present operational condition reshaping public safety challenges in ways that emergency management policy frameworks have not yet fully integrated.

## Five Documented Ways Climate Is Reshaping Island Public Safety

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**Increased emergency management demand frequency: Climate change is increasing the frequency of weather events that trigger emergency management responses — tropical storms, flooding, extreme heat, and wildfire — compressing recovery windows between events and accumulating capacity fatigue in emergency management systems that were not designed for the event frequency now being documented.**

**Infrastructure degradation: Coastal transportation infrastructure in Hawaii and Pacific Island communities is experiencing documented deterioration from sea level rise and storm surge intensification — reducing evacuation route capacity at the same time that climate change is increasing the frequency of evacuation-triggering events.**

**Climate displacement and community safety: Communities in Pacific Island nations that face near-term inundation or habitability loss are experiencing community safety impacts — increases in crime, domestic conflict, and social disruption — associated with the stress of impending displacement and the early departures of those who can leave.**

**Heat event public safety impacts: Extreme heat events in Hawaii and Pacific Island communities are producing documented increases in emergency medical service calls, heat-related illness, and behavioral health crises that emergency management systems are not staffed or resourced to manage at the frequencies climate change is producing.**

**Compound event escalation: The interaction between climate hazards and existing vulnerabilities — the wildfire that burns during an extreme wind event, the hurricane that arrives when emergency managers are still recovering from the previous flooding — is producing compound events with consequences that single-hazard emergency management planning did not anticipate.**

## ISPI Recommendations

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1. Integrate climate change supply disruption projections into island emergency preparedness planning with reserve and redundancy requirements adjusted for increasing event frequencies.
2. Commission systematic climate vulnerability assessments for Hawaii and Pacific Island community public safety infrastructure incorporating compound event scenarios rather than single-hazard analysis.
3. Fund climate adaptation public safety infrastructure investment at levels commensurate with documented risk trajectories — not historical event frequencies that understate the future.

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#### NOTES AND REFERENCES

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The Island Security Policy Institute (ISPI) is a nonprofit, nonpartisan research organization based in Honolulu, Hawaii. ISPI produces practitioner-led research, policy analysis, training programs, and commissioned research on public safety, emergency preparedness, insider threat, and security policy for island and coastal communities worldwide. ISPI is registered as a federal contractor on SAM.gov under NAICS 541720. Warren Pulley, Founder & Executive Director.

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