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General

Tonga, a member of the British Commonwealth, consists of about 150 islands and islets located in the South Pacific Ocean between 15°S and 23°30'S, and 173°W and 177°W.

The three main island groups, both from a historical and administrative standpoint, are Vava'u in the N, Ha'apai in the center and Tongatapu in the S.

The climate is tropical and modified by trade winds. The warm season is from December to May and the cool season is from May to December.

The terrain of most islands is a limestone base from uplifted coral formations. The other islands have limestone overlaying a volcanic base.

The islands to the E, being mostly of limestone formation, are low-lying and, with but a few exceptions, seldom exceed 30m above sea level.

The islands to the W are of a volcanic nature and average between 106 and 1,046m high. The highest point in the group is an extinct volcano, Kao, of 1,125m.

The Tongatapu group contains seven major islands, the largest of which is Tongatapu, a coral island on which Nuku'alofa, the capital and chief port is situated.

Approximately one-half of the kingdom's entire population live on this low-lying island.

The Ha'apai group is a cluster of 36 islands of mixed form, only 20 of which are permanently inhabited. The largest of the group is Togua, an active volcano whose crater contains a steaming lake.

The Vava'u group consists of 34 islands. The island of Vava'u is the largest of the Vava'u group and is famous for its harbor. Fourteen of the other islands are uninhabited.

Buoyage System

The IALA Buoyage System (Region A) is in effect. See Chart No. 1 for further IALA Buoyage System information.

Currency

The official unit of currency is the Tongan dollar, called a pa'anga, consisting of 100 seniti.

Government

Tonga is a hereditary constitutional monarchy with the King exercising wide influence. The government consists of the King, the Privy Council, the Cabinet, the Legislative Assembly, and the judiciary. In the Legislative Assembly, the 33 nobles have seven representatives and the people also have seven representatives elected by universal suffrage.

The Prime Minister is head of the government. Local government is by town and district officers appointed by the Prime Minister.

The capital is Nuku'alga on Tongatapu.

Holidays

The following holidays are observed:

June 4, Emancipation Day; New Year's Day; Good Friday; Easter; April 25, Anzac Day; May 4, Birthday of Crown Prince; July 4, Birthday of H.M. King Tauga'ahau Tupou IV;

November 4, Constitution Day; December 4, Birthday of King Tupou; December 25, Christmas Day; and December 26, Boxing Day.

Industries

The main industries are tourism and fishing. Production of copra and bananas provides the basis of the Tongan economy.

Other crops produced for export include watermelons, tomatoes, kava root, capsicum, and vanilla beans. Pigs are probably the most important livestock in Tonga.

There are several small industries manufacturing such products as plastic pipes, charcoal, corrugated iron, and handicrafts.

Languages

Tongan, a Polynesian dialect, is the indigenous language but most people also speak English.

Mined Areas

Within the Tonga Islands, all known minefields in approaches to Tongatabu have been swept. Ships should not anchor nor submarines bottom within the following areas:

- 1a. 21°01'30"S, 175°15'00"W.
- 1b. 21°01'30"S, 175°18'35"W.

- 1c. 21°03'20"S, 175°17'55"W.
- 1d. 21°02'23"S, 175°15'00"W.
- 2a. 20°59'00"S, 175°10'30"W.
- 2b. 20°59'00"S, 175°14'30"W.
- 2c. 21°01'30"S, 175°14'30"W.
- 2d. 21°01'30"S, 175°10'30"W.
- 3a. 21°00'00"S, 175°07'00"W.
- 3b. 21°00'00"S, 175°10'30"W.
- 3c. 21°03'45"S, 175°10'30"W.
- 3d. 21°03'45"S, 175°07'00"W.
- 4a. 21°05'00"S, 175°13'49"W.
- 4b. 21°05'00"S, 175°14'25"W.
- 4c. 21°05'50"S, 175°14'25"W.
- 4d. 21°05'50"S, 175°13'49"W.

Time Zone

The Time Zone description is MIKE (-13).

U.S. Embassy

The U.S. has no offices in Tonga.

The ambassador to Fiji is reported to be accredited to Tonga.