

Global Protocol Professionals Gather in Miami



PDI-POA: Protocol Officers Association
 Protocol & Diplomacy International - Protocol Officers Association / PDI-POA

We are delighted to announce the **24th Annual International Protocol Education Forum** of the Protocol & Diplomacy International—Protocol Officers Association (PDI-POA). This premier event will occur from July 21 to 24, 2025, at the elegant Biltmore Hotel, 1200 Anastasia Avenue, Coral Gables, Florida 33134, USA.

Dubbed the “City Beautiful,” Coral Gables is famous for its tree-lined boulevards, ivy-colored mansions, Mediterranean Revival architecture, historic landmarks, etc. Graced with effortless beauty and sophistication, the Biltmore Hotel is a National Historic Landmark in the Coral Gables area near Miami International Airport, Miami Beach, and Downtown Miami. Coral Gables is a classic South Florida vacation destination.

This year’s theme, **“Cultivating Cultural Connections,”** will unite over 200 distinguished participants from 20 countries to exchange insights, foster collaboration, and celebrate the art of protocol and diplomacy. Attendees will have the unique opportunity to enhance their professional expertise, expand their global networks, and strengthen their organizations’ international reputations.

As the global marketplace continues to grow interconnected, mastering the principles of protocol is more essential than ever. This Forum provides an unparalleled platform for participants to refine their skills and share best practices in navigating the complexities of cross-cultural communication, etiquette, diplomacy, protocol, and international relations.

We encourage you to take advantage of this exceptional opportunity to learn from leading experts and peers in protocol and diplomacy. Please visit our website at www.protocolinternational.org and click **“Join us in Miami.”** Registration is open to PDI-POA members and non-members.

The Protocol & Diplomacy International—Protocol Officers Association (PDI-POA) is a nonprofit organization established in 2002 to support a global community of protocol and diplomacy professionals. Over the years, PDI-POA has become a leading resource for education, mentorship, and networking. Its diverse membership includes protocol officers serving in government, international corporations, museums, cultural institutions, academia, and other fields. These professionals play a crucial role in fostering international cooperation by upholding codes of conduct and facilitating productive engagements between leaders and organizations worldwide.

We look forward to welcoming you to the 24th Annual International Protocol Education Forum and to celebrating the art of cultivating cultural connections together.



JANUARY 2025

Division Director’s Message



U. Desmond Alufohai
 Director

Protocol & International Affairs Division
 Miami-Dade Aviation Department (MDAD)

I am profoundly humbled and deeply grateful for the outpouring of support and kind words following my receipt of the United States President’s Lifetime Achievement Award for outstanding leadership, community involvement, and voluntary service on January 21, 2025, at the Capital Hilton Hotel, Washington, DC. This prestigious honor is not only a personal milestone but also a reflection of the enduring values of service, leadership, and commitment. It stands as a testament to the encouragement, inspiration, and unwavering belief I have received from so many of you. Thank you for being an integral part of this journey and for inspiring me to continue serving with purpose, dedication, and integrity.

Additionally, it is our privilege to warmly welcome Mr. Antonio Reginald Victor-Louis, Consul General of the Republic of Haiti in Miami; Mr. Junya Nakano, Consul General of Japan in Miami; and Mr. Kerry Frank, Deputy Consul General of Grenada in Miami, to our community. Their presence enriches our shared mission of fostering collaboration and strengthening international ties. We also take this opportunity to salute all nations celebrating their independence or national days during the months of December and January. These milestones are a reminder of the rich cultural heritage and shared aspirations that unite us all. Please be safe, always and enjoy our combined December 2024 and January 2025 edition.

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DIPLOMATIC & CONSULAR RELATIONS

Meet the new Consul General of the Republic d'Haïti in Miami, Florida



Mr. Antonio Reginald VICTOR-LOUIS was born in Port-au-Prince, the capital of the Republic of Haiti. He is a career diplomat and senior official since 1990, and a seasoned entrepreneur and businessman. He holds a degree in Political Science and Public Administration from the Inter-American University of Puerto Rico (1990) and a master's degree in Small and Medium Enterprise Management and Leadership from EFEM Escuela de Formación Empresarial in Madrid (EFEM), Spain (2013). He joined the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in 1990, starting his career as Cultural Attaché at the Embassy of Haiti in the Dominican Republic. In 1992, he was promoted to Second Secretary of the Migrant Section at Haiti's diplomatic mission in the Dominican Republic. In this capacity, he contributed to the establishment of the Commission of Inquiry into human rights violations against Haitians in the Dominican Republic and worked on promoting and protecting minors' rights and combating arbitrary detention.

At the end of 1992, Mr. Victor-Louis returned to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs as Second Administrative Assistant. He was later assigned to the Political Affairs Direction, where he oversaw and analyzed Political turbulence in all the post-Communist Eastern Europe countries until April 1995. Transitioning from the public to the private sector, Mr. Victor-Louis served as Country Manager for HCI Holland International Ltd., (Haiti branch) from 1995 to 1997, Vice President of International Chemical Industries S.A. (1997–2000), and Vice President of Haitian Aviation Inc. (2000–2005).

Returning to diplomacy in 2005, he was appointed Counselor and Head of the Cultural Section at Haiti's Embassy in the Dominican Republic. In 2009, he was transferred to the Consulate General of Haiti in Santiago, where he became Head of the Consular Post. In 2012, he was appointed Deputy Chief of Mission at Haiti's diplomatic representation in Panama as Minister Counselor. There, he focused on trade and direct investment initiatives for Haiti while also heading the consular section. In 2018, Mr. Victor-Louis was reassigned to Haiti as Deputy Director of the Direction of Dominican Affairs at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

Concurrently, he served as President and CEO of Aviclo Chemicals Import-Export. He was appointed Consul General of Haiti in Miami in July 2024, with jurisdiction over Florida, Texas, Alabama, Mississippi, Louisiana, Puerto Rico, and the US Virgin Islands.

Meet Japan's new Consul General to Miami, Florida



Mr. Junya Nakano, Consul General of Japan in Miami, assumed his post as Consul General of Japan in Miami in November 2024. A seasoned diplomat with a distinguished career in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA), he began his diplomatic journey in 1991. His very first posting was as Second Secretary at the Embassy of Japan in Russia. Before his current appointment, Consul General Nakano served as Minister and Deputy Chief of Mission at the Embassy of Japan in the Lao People's Democratic Republic (PDR). In that capacity, he made a significant contribution to enhancing bilateral relations between Japan and the Lao PDR, especially on the occasion of Lao Chairmanship of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) in 2024.

Consul General Nakano held key positions in Tokyo, including Deputy Director of the First Analysis Division, Principal Deputy Director of the Russian Assistance Division and the Climate Change Division, Senior Negotiator for the Climate Change Division, and Director of the Climate Change Division within MOFA. He also served as Director of the Office of International Cultural Exchange at the Agency for Cultural Affairs and Director of the Trade License Division and the CITES Management Authority at the Ministry of Economy, Trade, and Industry.

In addition to his assignments in Russia and the Lao PDR, Consul General Nakano has worked as an Economic Counselor at the Embassy of Japan in Australia and as Minister of the Permanent Mission of Japan to the United Nations. Consul General Nakano graduated from Tokyo University's Faculty of Law in 1991 and obtained a Master of Science degree at the London School of Economics in 1994. With extensive diplomatic experience in Japan and abroad, he brings invaluable expertise to his current role in Miami, where he continues strengthening Japan's international relations.

Meet the new Deputy Consul General of Grenada in Miami, Florida



Mr. Kerry Frank is the new Deputy Consul General of Grenada in Miami, Florida. He was born in St. Andrew, Grenada. He obtained his high school diploma from Presentation Brothers College in 2003 and an Associate degree in General Studies from T. A. Marrayshow Community College in 2016. He attended the University of the West Indies Open Campus from 2016 to 2020, where he obtained his Bachelor of Science degree in Youth Development. He is a career public officer with over 15 years of service to the Government of Grenada. He has served for nine years in the Protocol and Consular Division of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs as a Foreign Service Officer. In that position, he provided support to the state in organizing and executing various events and activities of both national and international significance, while ensuring airport courtesies

were extended to government and visiting dignitaries and officials.

In this role, he also provided consular services to government officials and nationals of Grenada, both at home and abroad. Before his service in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, he spent six years in the Ministry of Youth Development and Sports as a Youth Officer. In September 2024, he was appointed to serve as Deputy Consul General at the Consulate General of Grenada in Miami.

BRIEFS & NOTES

Recipients of the U.S. President's 2025 Lifetime Achievement Award



L-R: Mayor Alix Desulme, City of North Miami, Vice Mayor Joy B. Smith, City of West Park, FL, and U. Desmond Alufohai.

The Honorable Alix Desulme, Mayor, City of North Miami, Florida, The Honorable Joy B. Smith, Vice Mayor, City of West Park, Florida, and U. Desmond Alufohai were recently honored at the Capital Hilton Hotel, Washington DC as recipients of the [U.S. President's Lifetime Achievement Award](#), on January 21, 2025. Established by an [executive order from President George W. Bush](#), the President's Lifetime Achievement Award recognizes individuals who have contributed more than 4,000 hours of extraordinary leadership and voluntary service. It represents the highest civil honor bestowed by the President of the United States for community service.

The origins of this honor trace back to President George H. W. Bush's inaugural address, which invoked the vision of "a thousand points of light." During that address, President Bush inspired the nation to engage in acts of service to benefit their fellow citizens. In 1990, he launched the [Daily Point of Light Award](#) to recognize individuals making meaningful contributions to their communities. Over 1,000 individuals were honored under this initiative, with President Bush stating that these recipients exemplified how "a neighbor can help a neighbor." This spirit of service led to the creation of the [Points of Light Foundation](#), an independent,

nonpartisan nonprofit organization aimed at empowering and fostering volunteerism nationwide. Founded on the belief that "what government alone can do is limited, but the potential of the American people knows no limits," the foundation has become a driving force for civic engagement. In [1997, the Presidents' Summit for America's Future](#) brought together Presidents George H. W. Bush, Bill Clinton, Jimmy Carter, Gerald Ford, and First Lady Nancy Reagan to address the nation's pressing social challenges and emphasize the importance of voluntary action. This commitment to service culminated in 2001 when Points of Light and its vast network of partners declared the [Year of the Volunteer](#), rallying individuals and organizations worldwide to contribute to their communities.

President George W. Bush further advanced this legacy in his 2002 State of the Union Address by announcing the creation of the USA Freedom Corps, an initiative designed to harness the surge of goodwill and community action that followed the tragic events of September 11, 2001. In 2003, he established the President's Council on Service and Civic Participation to recognize Americans for their contributions through service formally. This initiative also gave rise to the President's Volunteer Service Award, now administered by the Points of Light Institute. Under President Obama, the nation's call to service reached new heights with the signing of the Edward M. Kennedy Serve America Act in 2009. This legislation expanded opportunities for Americans to engage in national and community service. The United We Serve campaign also encouraged citizens to dedicate their time and talents to causes that strengthen communities and improve lives.

In 2019, during the Points of Light conference, the organization unveiled a vision for the "Civic Century," a renewed emphasis on engaging individuals and organizations to make service a cultural norm. The Points of Light Institute pledged to inspire people to contribute their time, talents, voice, and resources toward building a brighter, more inclusive future for all. The President's Lifetime Achievement Award is a testament to the enduring spirit of service that has shaped the United States. [Click here](#) to learn more about the eligibility requirements and certifying organizations.



Sources: [Points of Light](#); [Presidentslifetimeachievementaward](#); [LearningtoGive](#);

Protocol Officer Axel Tullmann and Sr. Agent Michael Casellas garner MDAD's 2024 "Employees of the Year"



On Friday, August 30th, a distressed passenger was found at the Concourse E Information Counter. The man, in a wheelchair with scattered luggage, spoke little English and had been stranded at the airport for four days due to health issues that prevented him from boarding his international flight. Customer Service and Terminal Operations personnel attempted to assist him but could not secure a spot on his original flight.

Protocol Officer Tullmann intervened, initially approaching several airlines unsuccessfully to arrange a new flight. He stayed with the passenger, taking him to lunch at Burger King. At the end of his shift, he informed Senior Agent Michael Casellas of the situation and requested to remain for the next shift to continue helping. Eventually, Officer Tullmann and Senior Agent Casellas used the airport gym to shower the passenger and dressed him cleanly. They then purchased a new ticket with own their funds and successfully boarded the

passenger to his destination. Mr. Tullmann and Mr. Casellas were named "Employees of the Year". They received this recognition from Airport Director Mr. Ralph Cutié during the Annual Rewards & Recognition Gala on December 12th at MIA's Viena Restaurant.

AVIATION, CULTURE, ETIQUETTE & PROTOCOL TIDBITS

Culture, Etiquette and Protocol

Weirdest Foods from Around the World

“One man's meat is another man's poison” is an idiom that means people have different tastes and preferences. So, it's time to take a trip around the world and delve into some weird foods.

Haggis – Scotland: A sheep's heart, liver and lungs minced and mixed with onions, oatmeal, suet and seasoned with salt and spices cooked inside the animal's stomach.

Khash – Africa, Middle East, East Europe and Turkey: A pretty gruesome little dish made up of stewed cows' feet and head. It was once winter comfort food but is now considered a delicacy

Black Pudding (Blood Sausage) – Africa, Americas, Asia, Europe: Congealed blood cooked up with various natural flavorings, thickening agents like suet and breadcrumbs.

Hákarl – Iceland: The rotting carcass of a Greenland or basking (Somniosidae) shark. It's buried underground in a shallow pit and pressed with stones so the poisonous internal fluids that allow it to live in such cold waters can be drained out making the meat safe to eat. After this it's hung out to dry before being cut into strips and served. It smells like ammonia with a strong 'fishy-flavor.'

Stinkheads – Alaska, United States: The fermented head of a king salmon, buried underground for a few weeks and eaten as a pungent, putty-like mush.

Wasp Crackers – Japan: It's a biscuit filled with wasps. Think chocolate chip cookies, only the insects replace the chocolate chips.

Fried Spider – Cambodia: Fried spider is a regional delicacy popular in the Cambodian town of Skuon, prepared by marinating it in MSG, sugar and salt and then frying it in garlic. Apparently it has more meat on it than a grasshopper, but also has a brown sludge in the abdomen, which consists of mainly innards, eggs and excrement.

Escamol – Mexico: Also known as 'insect caviar, this dish is made of the edible larvae and pupae of ants, harvested from the tequila or mesquite plant. Considered something of a delicacy, it is said to have consistency of cottage cheese and a buttery, nutty taste.

Stink Bugs – Africa: Used to flavor stews or eaten on their own, stinkbugs are said to have a crunch to them and taste a little like apple. Prepared by boiling, the bugs release defensive pheromones in a last-ditch attempt to survive, and while it hurts the eyes it's no more successful than the onion's weak survival attempt.

Bird's Nest Soup – Southeast Asia: This Asian delicacy is made from the nest of the swiftlet bird, who instead of collecting twigs for its bed, builds it out of its own gummy saliva, which goes hard when exposed to air. Usually, the built high up on cliff faces, harvesting them is a dangerous business and many people die each year.

Fugu – Japan: Made famous by The Simpsons, this little delicacy has the potential to be deadly if prepared incorrectly. As such, only chefs that have been drilled to perfection are allowed to handle the serving of the pufferfish. Still, it's said to make one mean little sashimi dish.

Southern Fried Rattlesnake – United States: A favorite in the Southwestern United States, it's said to taste a little like frogs legs. Experts advise boiling the meat off the bones before dipping in egg and covering in seasoned salt mix, flour, and breadcrumbs.

Ying-Yang Fish – China: Ying Yang Fish is a fish that has been deep fried and kept alive. A video can be seen of diners prodding at the face and eyes with their chopsticks while they eat to make the fish move, with its mouth and gills opening as it struggles to breathe.

Source: [Hostel World](#).

Aviation Briefs & Facts

The Evolution of the Airplane Seat



[Airline Interior](#)

Airline seats have evolved from simple, scaled-down porch furniture to sophisticated, high-tech seating systems. During the earliest days of air travel, airline seats were merely wicker chairs fastened to the floor of the aircraft. To make the seating comfortable, the chairs were lined with leather and padding. According to [Air Charter Service USA](#), “the first passenger seat was a wicker chair on a Lawson Airliner in 1919”. Wicker chairs were what airlines resorted to for the next decade. In 1930, [the Aluminum Company of America](#) created a light passenger seat. The seat was made from aluminum, a

metal that is used to create the frame of aircraft seats to this day.

Airline seats continue to evolve significantly, driven by advancements in technology, passenger expectations, and airline strategies to enhance comfort and maximize revenue. Here are some of the key changes shaping the evolution of airline seating:

Comfort: Airlines have transitioned from simple, padded seats to ergonomic designs with adjustable headrests, lumbar support, and improved cushioning to enhance passenger comfort.

Size: While economy seats have generally become narrower to accommodate more passengers, premium cabins have seen an increase in space. Wider seats, more legroom, and even fully flat beds are now common in higher classes.

Cabin Classes: The traditional two-class system (economy and first class) has expanded to include business class and premium economy, offering passengers a broader range of options tailored to their needs and budgets.

Seat Features: Modern airline seats now include innovative features such as personal entertainment screens, USB charging ports, power outlets, and even massage functions in premium cabins.

Seating Configurations: Airlines have experimented with diverse seating layouts, such as staggered seating in business class, pod-style designs, and suites with doors in first class. These configurations balance passenger privacy with efficient use of cabin space.

Business Class: Once a modest upgrade from economy, business class has evolved into a premium experience featuring lie-flat beds, direct aisle access, and elevated dining options, appealing to both business and leisure travelers.

Economy Class: Despite increasing density, economy seating has seen some innovations, such as slimmer seat designs, enhanced recline mechanisms, and entertainment options to improve the overall passenger experience.

First Class: Reserved for the most discerning travelers, first-class seating now includes private suites, luxurious bedding, and personalized services. Some airlines offer enclosed cabins for unparalleled exclusivity.

Sources: [Smithsonianmag.com](#); [Travelandleisure.com](#); [Simpleflying.com](#);

BRIEFS & NOTES

The Origin and History of Passports



The passport, a document synonymous with modern international travel, has a rich history that traces its origins back thousands of years. Far from being a mere administrative tool, the passport has evolved to symbolize identity, sovereignty, and mobility across borders. A passport is an official document issued by a government, certifying the holder's identity and citizenship and entitling them to travel under its protection to and from foreign countries. The concept of a passport can be traced to ancient civilizations.

Historical records suggest that in around 450 BCE, the Persian king Artaxerxes I issued letters granting safe passage to travelers within his empire. These early passports were written permissions that assured security and unhindered travel across territories under a ruler's dominion. Similarly, in biblical texts, the book of Nehemiah describes the Persian king granting Nehemiah letters to ensure his safe journey to Judea, further exemplifying the use of travel permits in ancient governance.

The term "[passport](#)" itself is believed to have medieval European roots. During [the Middle Ages](#), travelers were required to carry documents that allowed them to pass through city gates or ports, often referred to as "portes." The combination of "pass" and "porte" eventually gave rise to the modern word. These early passports, however, were primarily issued to facilitate domestic travel rather than international journeys, as countries in their modern sense did not yet exist. The evolution of passports accelerated during [the Renaissance period](#) as European states began issuing travel documents to regulate the movement of people. By the 16th and 17th centuries, passports became increasingly associated with international travel. Monarchs and governments issued these documents to diplomats, merchants, and other authorized travelers, often as a mark of privilege and security.

The modern passport system, as we recognize it, began to take shape in the 19th and early 20th centuries. With the rise of nation-states and the expansion of international travel due to industrialization and advancements in transportation, the need for standardized identification became apparent. World War I was a turning point, as nations introduced strict border controls and passport requirements to enhance security and manage migration. [The League of Nations](#), formed after the war, established guidelines for passport design and standardization. The 20th century saw the widespread adoption of passports for all travelers, not just the elite. Technological advancements, including photographs and machine-readable features, transformed passports into reliable tools for identity verification. The 21st century has ushered in biometric passports, equipped with microchips that store personal and travel data, further enhancing security and streamlining border processes.

Today, passports are not only functional documents and also symbols of citizenship and international connectivity. Their evolution reflects humanity's journey from localized governance to a globalized world, embodying both the privileges and responsibilities of mobility across borders.

Sources: [National Geographic](#); [DW Lifestyle](#);

National Learn a Foreign Language Month



Learning another language comes with a wealth of benefits. That's why [December was National Learn a Foreign Language Month](#). Most people learn a second language while in school. They may not be proficient in the language, especially if they do not have the opportunity to speak conversationally. There are many platforms for learning a new language. And with over half the world's population being bilingual, you can learn, too.

Glossary of Terms:

[Native Language vs. Mother Tongue](#): Both are generally used interchangeably to refer to the first language a person learns, usually in early childhood. It also refers to the language that a person acquires in early childhood because it is spoken in the family and/or it is the language of the region where the child lives.

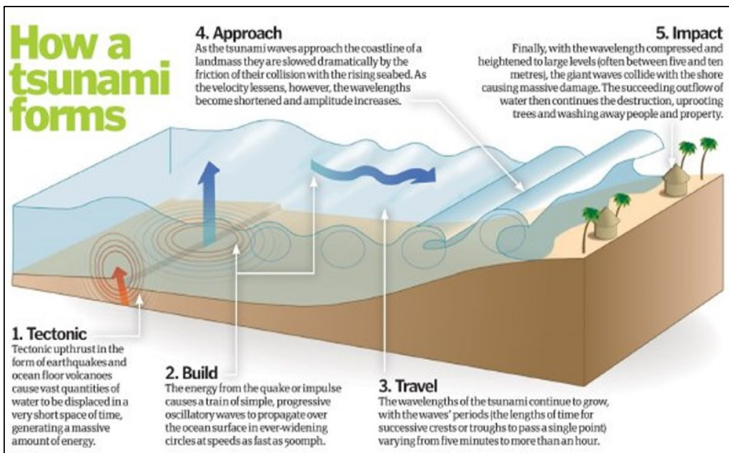
[Monolingualism or Unilingualism](#): Knowledge of only one language. A [linguist](#) is a professional who studies and analyzes language, its structure, and its usage. They are language scientists trying to figure out how and why we use the words we use.

[Bilingualism](#) or being bilingual means to be able to speak two languages fluently. The word originates from the Latin 'bi', meaning 'having two', and 'lingua', meaning tongue. [Trilingualism](#) is fluency in three (3) languages.

[Multilingualism](#) is the ability of an individual [speaker](#) or a community of speakers to communicate effectively in three or more [languages](#). A [polyglot](#) describes someone who is highly fluent in several languages. The number of languages spoken by a polyglot is up for debate. Since *poly* means "many," a person just needs to know many languages to be considered a polyglot. However, many linguists believe [mastering five to six languages](#) makes someone a polyglot. [Plurilingualism](#): The term "plurilingualism" comes from the Latin "pluri-" and "-lingue", which literally means "several languages." It is the ability to communicate in multiple languages, and to use linguistic and cultural knowledge in social situations. Plurilingualism emphasizes the interconnectedness of different languages and cultures, and the importance of valuing even partial competences in languages and cultures.

BRIEFS & NOTES

Cyclones, Hurricanes, Monsoons, Tornadoes, and Tsunamis



December 26, 2024, marked 20 years since one of the deadliest natural disasters in modern times happened. Twenty years ago, a massive tsunami in southern Asia, triggered by a **9.1 earthquake** off the coast of Indonesia, killed more than 200,000 people in 14 countries around the Indian Ocean. A new documentary, called **"Tsunami: Race Against Time,"** looks back at that devastating day, December 26, 2004, with never-before-seen footage. Apocalyptic scenes flickered across TV screens around the world: leveled coastlines, uprooted palm trees, and people desperately searching for their loved ones under the rubble of their destroyed homes.

A **tsunami** (/ˈsuːˈnɑːmi, (t)sʊˈ-/ (t)soo-NAH-mee, (t)suu-; from Japanese: 津波, lit. 'harbour wave', pronounced [tsunami]) is a series of waves in a water body caused by the displacement of a large volume of water, generally in an ocean or a large lake.

Earthquakes, volcanic eruptions and underwater explosions (including detonations, landslides, glacier calvings, meteorite impacts and other disturbances) above or below water all have the potential to generate a tsunami. Unlike normal ocean waves, which are generated by wind, or tides, which are in turn generated by the gravitational pull of the Moon and the Sun, a tsunami is generated by the displacement of water from a large event. There is no season for tsunamis, as they can occur at any time, in any weather, and along any ocean coast. Below are some other weather phenomena:

A **tropical cyclone** is a generic term used by meteorologists to describe a rotating, organized system of clouds and thunderstorms that originates over tropical or subtropical waters and has closed, low-level circulation. According to the **National Oceanic & Atmospheric Administration** (NOAA) **hurricanes and typhoons** are the same weather phenomenon: **tropical cyclones**. The weakest tropical cyclones are called **tropical depressions**. If a depression intensifies such that its maximum sustained winds reach 39 miles per hour, the tropical cyclone becomes a **tropical storm**. Once a tropical cyclone reaches maximum sustained winds of 74 miles per hour or higher, it is then classified as a hurricane, typhoon, or tropical cyclone, depending upon where the storm originates in the world. In the North Atlantic, central North Pacific, and eastern North Pacific, the term **hurricane** is used. The same type of disturbance in the Northwest Pacific is called a **typhoon**. Meanwhile, in the South Pacific and Indian Ocean, the generic term **tropical cyclone** is used, regardless of the strength of the wind associated with the weather system.

A **hurricane** is a massive, powerful storm that begins over the Atlantic Ocean in the warm months between June and November. Hurricanes only form over a warm body of water because that warmth acts as fuel for the storm. When the winds of a tropical storm pass 74mph (119kmh) they turn into hurricanes. The rotation of the Earth gives momentum to hurricanes, causing the iconic spiral pattern. Interestingly, these mega-storms spin counterclockwise in the northern hemisphere and clockwise in the southern hemisphere due to the spin of the Earth. Scientists break hurricanes into categories of 1-5, with Category 5 having the fastest winds of over 157mph.

The word **monsoon** is derived from the Arabic word *mausim*, which means season. Traders plying the waters off the Arabian and Indian coasts noted for centuries that dry northeast winds in the winter suddenly turn to the southwest during the summer and bring beneficial yet torrential rains to the Asian subcontinent. We now know that these large-scale wind shifts, from dry desert areas to moist tropical areas, occur in other parts of the Earth, including the Oceanic subcontinent, Southeast Asia, Australia, North America, Africa and South America. These wind shifts, and the dramatic change in the weather they bring, are all more or less driven by a similar mechanism. For much of the year, low level winds in dry subtropical regions tend to blow from the land toward the sea.

However, by late spring, strong solar heating causes temperatures to soar over these land areas. The intense heat causes surface air pressure to fall, forming an area of low pressure known as a thermal low. Adjacent large bodies of water are also warmed, but not as quickly. Thus, air pressures remain high relative to the land.

A **tornado** is a small-diameter column of violently rotating air developed within a convective cloud and in contact with the ground. Tornadoes occur most often in association with thunderstorms during the spring and summer in the mid-latitudes of both the Northern and Southern Hemispheres. These whirling atmospheric vortices can generate the strongest winds known on Earth: wind speeds in the range of 500 km (300 miles) per hour have been measured in extreme events. When winds of this magnitude strike a populated area, they can cause fantastic destruction and great loss of life, mainly through injuries from flying debris and collapsing structures.

Sources: [Wikipedia](#); [NOAA](#); [National Geographic](#).

INDEPENDENCE AND NATIONAL DAYS (DECEMBER 2024)

- December 1, 1640 – Portugal:** The day commemorates the restoration of Portuguese independence after 60 years of Spanish rule.
- December 1, 1918 – Romania:** Great Union Day marks the unification of Transylvania, Bessarabia and Bukovina with the Romanian Kingdom.
- December 1, 1958 – Central African Republic:** On this date, the French colony of Ubangi-Shari was granted independence within the French Community but remained part of the French Empire in Africa. The country was renamed the Central African Republic when it gained full independence from France on August 13, 1960.
- December 5 - Thailand:** The birthday anniversary of the late King Bhumibol Adulyadej The Great continues to be celebrated as Thailand's National Day.
- December 5, 1972 - United Arab Emirates:** On this day, known as Union Day, six of the seven emirates formed a federation, founding the UAE. The 7th joined on December 10, 1972.
- December 6, 1917 – Finland:** Finland gained independence from Russia on December 4, 1917.
- December 9, 1961 – Tanzania:** Tanganyika gained independence from Britain on December 9, 1961. In 1964, it merged with Zanzibar to become Tanzania.
- December 11, 1931 – South Africa:** On this day in 1931, South Africa gained independence from Great Britain, but retained the British monarch as its head of state. On May 31, 1961, the country became a republic, severing all formal ties with Great Britain.
- December 11, 1958 – Burkina Faso:** Republic Day commemorates the day that Upper Volta became an autonomous republic in the French Community and gained independence from France on August 5, 1960. On August 4, 1984, Upper Volta was renamed Burkina Faso.
- December 12, 1963 – Kenya:** “Jamhuri Day” celebrates Kenya’s independence from Britain and the establishment of the Republic of Kenya.
- December 13 – St. Lucia:** Feast Day of St. Lucy, patron saint of St. Lucia, is celebrated as the National Day.
- December 16, 1971 – Bahrain:** After gaining independence from the United Kingdom on August 15, 1971, Bahrain gained independence from British protection on December 16, 1971.
- December 16, 1991 – Kazakhstan:** On this day, Kazakhstan gained independence from the Soviet Union.
- December 17, 1907 – Bhutan:** On this date, Bhutan became a unified kingdom under Ugyen Wangchuck, its first hereditary king. On August 8, 1949, Bhutan signed the Indo-Bhutanese Treaty of Friendship with India, which maintained Bhutanese independence.
- December 18, 1878 – Qatar:** Founder’s Day, Qatar’s National Day, celebrates the country’s unification in 1878. Qatar gained independence from Britain on September 3, 1971.
- December 20, 1999 – Macau:** On this day in 1999, Portugal formally returned Macau to China.
- December 24, 1951 – Libya:** Libya gained independence from Italy on this day.
- December 26, 1990 – Slovenia:** Independence and Unity Day is celebrated to commemorate the official proclamation of the Slovenian independence referendum.
- December 29, 1911 – Mongolia:** Mongolia declared its independence from the Manchu-led Qing Empire in 1911 but did not achieve full independence from China until July 11, 1921. December 29 has been celebrated annually since 2011.

INDEPENDENCE AND NATIONAL DAYS (JANUARY 2025)

January 1, 1804 – Haiti: Two months after beating the French forces, Jean-Jacques Dessalines proclaimed the independence of Saint-Domingue. He renamed it Haiti after the original Taíno-Arawak name for the entire island of Hispaniola, which they called Ay-ti, 'land of mountains'.

January 1, 1956 – Sudan: On this date, Sudan gained independence from Egypt and Great Britain.

January 1, 1960 – Cameroon: In 1960, French Cameroun gained independence from France, and the Republic of Cameroon was proclaimed. After an UN-supervised plebiscite on February 11, 1961, in British Cameroons, the south decided to join Cameroon, creating the Federal Republic of Cameroon, while the north joined the Federation of Nigeria.

January 1, 1962 – Samoa: On this date, Samoa gained full independence from New Zealand, becoming the first Pacific nation to gain independence. The date of the holiday was moved to June 1 so that it would not conflict with New Year's Day.

January 1, 1984 – Brunei Darussalam: Brunei Darussalam had been a British protectorate since 1888 and gained full independence from the United Kingdom on January 1, 1984.

January 4, 1948 – Myanmar: Burma declared independence from British rule on January 4, 1948. In 1989, the military controlled government renamed the country Myanmar. This name originated from "Mranma"; the name of the Bamar people who first started migrating from China to the Irrawaddy River during the 7th century.

January 22, 1918 – Ukraine: On this day in 1918, the Ukrainian People's Republic declared its independence from Soviet Russia, and on January 22, 1919, the Act of Unity briefly united the Western and Greater (Eastern) Ukrainian Republics. In 1922, the new Union of Soviet Socialist Republics reconquered Ukraine, and the country became one of the original republics of the USSR. On August 24, 1991, Ukraine regained its independence. January 22 remains an important day for Ukrainians and is celebrated as Unity Day.

January 26, 1788 – Australia: Australia Day commemorates the landing of the First Fleet in Port Jackson, New South Wales, on January 26, 1788. On this day, the British flag was raised for the first time, signaling both the beginning of the colony and the founding of Australia.

January 31, 1968 – Nauru: A 1919 agreement placed the island under joint British-Australian-New Zealand rule. Nauru was granted self-rule in 1966 and achieved full independence in 1968, making it the smallest island country on Earth, and third smallest in landmass behind only Vatican City and Monaco.

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