

## TONGA

### The Kingdom of Tonga

The Kingdom of Tonga is located between latitudes 15°S and 23°S and longitudes 173°W and 177°W. This places Tonga first to the west of the International Dateline, South of Samoa and Southeast of Fiji. Tonga consists of three main island groups: Tongatapu/Eua, Ha'apai and Vava'u. There are 170 islands in the Tonga group of which 36 are inhabited. Dry land area of Tonga is 688 km<sup>2</sup> and the sea area covered by the group is 362,500 km<sup>2</sup>.

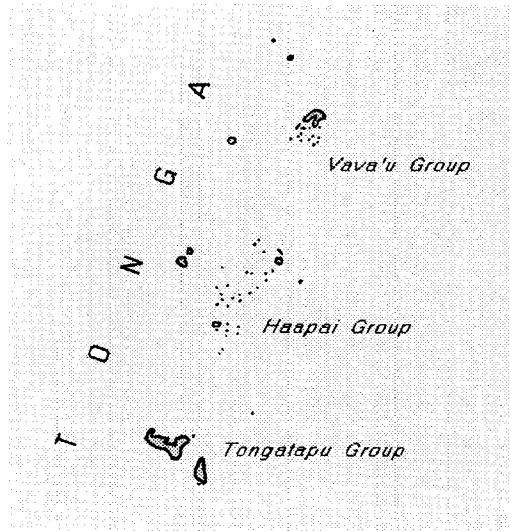


FIG. 1.- The Kingdom of Tonga.

The Kingdom of Tonga is also known as the friendly island and is a constitutional monarchy where King Taufa'ahau is the sovereign ruler of the approximately 100,000 people. Tongans are Polynesians and they were known seafarers in the past and they are still much involved in maritime activities.

## Hydrographic Service

On 1st April 1990, the Tonga Defence Services established its Hydrographic Office under Chief Hydrographic Surveyor, Lt. Cmdr. R.O. DAVIES RNZN (Rtd) by the direction of the Minister of Defence, HRH Crown Prince TUPOUTO'A, who is also the chairman of the Hydrographic Committee. Members of the Tonga Defense Services were then sent overseas for training in this new profession. Tonga achieved membership with the International Hydrographic Organization in 1996 as the 60th member.

In 1991 V.O.E.A. SAVEA was commissioned into the Tongan Navy (then Maritime Wing). This patrol boat has a double role for surveillance and hydrographic survey. The hydrographic office then started monitoring sea level and the preparation for the survey of the approach to Nuku'alofa and the harbour.

In December 1991, the United Kingdom assisted the Unit by donating survey equipment for a value of \$128,000. The founder of the unit and the new staff on return from their training started a survey in the Nuku'alofa harbour. In 1994, the Niuatoputapu harbour was surveyed and also Ha'afeva Harbour. These were done by the unit in less than 3 months. The unit then later continued with the approach to Lifuka in the Ha'apai group. This survey was started by the Royal New Zealand Navy.

In November 1995, the Nuku'alofa Harbour Survey was completed and cartographers compiled the data and send it to New Zealand for final check. The Unit is proud to inform other Member States that the chart for Niuatoputapu harbour which was surveyed by Tongans has been printed in New Zealand.

On 31 December 1995, Chief Hydrographer and founder completed his contract. He left Tonga in late January 1996. Everyone in the Unit misses him. Currently work continues on the Ha'apai survey.

The unit consists of three officers and seven ratings. One surveying officer is in the UK doing his Category A course. Most survey assistants are trained in New Zealand and Australia.

The present Charge Surveyor is Sub-Lieutenant Siua FIFITA.