

Author A.C. Frieden Researches the Maldivian Capital

MALÉ, Maldives (May 26, 2013) – Author A.C. Frieden arrived in Malé, the capital of Maldives (officially, Republic of the Maldives) after several days in the country’s South Ari Atoll. Frieden’s research in the capital included searching for key scenes for an upcoming novel. “Malé is an important international banking center in this part of the world, and it is also a key transit point for religious extremists traveling between the Middle East and South Asia,” said Frieden. “So, from a thriller author perspective, these two facts make this island a perfect setting for fictional plots involving counterintelligence operations, terrorism or organized crime.”



(Above) A.C. Frieden taking a ferryboat from the capital’s international airport to the central island.

The capital is located in the southern edge of North Malé Atoll and was formerly known as the King’s Island, from where the ancient Maldivian Royal dynasties ruled. The central island is heavily built-up and congested. Slightly less than one third of the nation’s population lives in the capital city, and the population is close to 100,000 people. In recent years, Malé has been embroiled in political protests and government tensions. The country experienced a series of coup attempts in the 1980s until finally Indian troops arrived to restore order.

In 2008 a new constitution was approved and the country held its first direct presidential elections. But the government has faced severe socio-economic challenges, including huge government debts left by the previous administrations, an economic slowdown following the 2004 tsunami that damaged many of the country’s islands, poorly managed monetary policies, business and government corruption, high unemployment, and increased smuggling and use of illegal drugs. In early 2012, the country again experienced a shakeup that many claim amounted to a military coup. This led to the 54-member Commonwealth group of nations suspending the Maldives from its democracy and human rights watchdog, and stopped just short of a complete suspension from the organization.



(Above) A.C. Frieden visited the grounds of the . Opened in 1984, the Islamic Centre (officially named Masjid-al-Sultan Muhammad Thakurufaanu Al Auzam) is a key landmark in Malé. It also houses the Ministry of Islamic-Affairs and, more importantly, the Grand Friday Mosque, named after the celebrated Maldivian hero Sultan Muhammad Thakurufaanu Al Auzam. The mosque is one of the largest in South Asia, with a capacity of over 5000 worshippers. Since about 2007, the Islamic Centre has become a key surveillance target for British and U.S. law enforcement and counterterrorism agencies.



(Above) Frieden stands at the gates of Muliage, the Official Residence of the President of the Maldives. It is located in the historic centre of Malé, close to the Grand Friday Mosque and the Munnaru (Grand Minaret of Malé). The building has also previously served as a former Prime Minister's residence and offices of the country's Supreme Court.



(Above) Malé's central island seen from the ferry.

About the author: A.C. Frieden is an international author and lawyer based in Chicago. His works include the Jonathan Brooks series thrillers *Tranquility Denied* and *The Serpent's Game*, as well as other fiction and non-fiction books. For more information, visit his website at www.acfrieden.com and his blogs.

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To contact the author, visit his official website or send correspondence to:

Avendia Publishing
Media Relations Dept.
444 N. Michigan Ave., Suite 1200
Chicago, IL 60611
Email: media@avendiapublishing.com