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From: Jeffrey Farrow [REDACTED]
Sent: Saturday, June 20, 2009 8:01 PM
To: H
Subject: Palau/Guantanamo Detainees

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The New York Times Just FYI. Palau UN Amb. Beck says you were friends in law school & thought you recognized him when he came in w/Pres. Toribiong. Hope you're not in pain and mend soon. Jeff

June 20, 2009

The Myth of the \$12 Million Uighur

By STUART BECK

CONGRATULATIONS Palau. Our little country, a group of islands 500 miles east of the Philippines, has become, if only briefly, a household word. President Obama, much admired in Palau, asked our new president, Johnson Toribiong, to do the United States a favor: Please accept, as refugees, a group of innocent Chinese Muslims. They are not anti-American terrorists, but victims of human rights violations, who landed at Guantánamo Bay for seven years. Innocent, stateless, harmless.

President Toribiong, a lawyer trained at the University of Washington and a highly regarded litigator, told President Obama and Secretary of State Hillary Clinton that he needed to assure his people that the Uighurs were indeed harmless, and could be integrated into Palau's small, diverse and friendly culture. Assuming that this due diligence brought satisfactory results, Palau would be pleased to give the refugees temporary residence. Last weekend, he dispatched a number of officials to Guantánamo to interview the Uighurs and review their records.

One would have thought that this positive gesture of friendship from a staunch American ally would have been applauded, at least in the United States. Instead, for reasons that are beyond me, unattributed leaks and unsubstantiated rumors have twisted Palau's act of decency into another grab for dollars by a cunning third-world country. In breaking the story that Palau was amenable to President Obama's request, the Associated Press reported that two anonymous State Department officials had linked Palau's acceptance of the Uighurs to a \$200 million payoff.

Almost immediately, much of the news media took the bait, did the math and asserted that Palau was getting nearly \$12 million dollars per Uighur. Within a day or two, The Wall Street Journal was pontificating against a shakedown. Before the story gets too far out of hand, let's consider a few facts. It is true that the United States and Palau have an economic relationship. Palau has been receiving American aid since it was wrested from the Japanese in 1944. (Over the past 15 years, this has averaged about \$56 million a year.) This aid has come with strings; as the United States has always insisted that the Palauan government be ready to promptly turn over land for bases should the security of the United States or Palau require it.

In 1994, the two countries agreed to a 50-year option that allows the United States to use Palau for military purposes. That agreement's economic terms expire in October 2009, and a new economic package for the remaining 35 years is in the works — and has been for some time. But there has never been a mention of \$200 million. And no one has even hinted at linking the deal to Palau's acceptance of the Uighurs. The United States simply offered to pay relocation costs for the Uighurs of less than \$90,000 per person to cover transportation, food, housing and medical help until the men can get oriented and get jobs.

Palau is a small and peaceful community. Its constitution bans weapons of all kinds. Capital crimes are virtually unknown. Social life revolves around the family. Children wander from house to house. Could anyone believe that the leaders of Palau would risk the safety and serenity of their modern Eden in exchange for money? Is it plausible that these close-knit people would countenance the presence of terrorists in their midst? I can assure you the answer is no.

Last week, the Palauans lowered their flags to half-staff in memory of Sgt. Jasper Obakrairur, a Palauan who joined the United States Marines and died on June 1 helping to root out the Taliban in Afghanistan. He was the fourth Palauan serviceman to die in recent years, following his fallen comrades in American uniform Cpl. JayGee Meluat, Cpl. Meresebang Ngiraked and Specialist Philton Ueki. The people of Palau are very proud of them, and of our country's special relationship with the United States. Can't Americans be proud of the relationship, too?

Stuart Beck is Palau's permanent representative to the United Nations.