



Republic of Palau
Office of the President

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President

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April 9, 2020
Serial No. 20-1672

The Honorable Lourdes A. Leon Guerrero
Governor of Guam
Ricardo J. Bordallo Governor's Complex
513 West Marine Corps Drive
Hagatna, Guam 96910

RE: Your letter of April 6 to the US COVID-19 Task Force

Dear Governor Leon Guerrero,

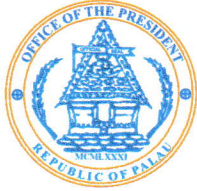
To begin we want to thank you for all that you are doing for the people of Guam, including your long-term Palauan residents, during this time of international crisis. We also want to thank you for your collaboration and for the direct assistance you have provided to Palau throughout this crisis. The speed at which you were able to test the sample from last week's suspected case brought great relief to our entire country, and we hope to have our own local testing ability up and running very soon. Technicians from the Republic of China are currently on-island, helping to train our technicians to run COVID-19 tests in local facilities.

In that context of genuine gratitude and friendship, we would like to clear up some misunderstandings that are apparent from your recent letter to U.S. Vice President Mike Pence, which was shared with us by your Chief of Staff.

We cannot speak for the other Freely Associated States, but we assure you that Palau is not intentionally disallowing its citizens to return home, nor is it encouraging or facilitating out-migration to Guam or any other U.S. jurisdiction. It is our policy to get Palauans home safely and keep them here.

As we can now say thanks to your assistance, Palau has no known cases of COVID-19. It has been several weeks since passenger air service has been permitted into or out of Palau. In this circumstance, we are confident that Palau is the safest place for Palauans to be.

It seems the source of this misunderstanding may be our proposed charter flight, which you reference in your letter to Vice President Pence and the COVID-19 Task Force. It is true that Palau is looking into chartering a flight from Guam to Palau. However, the purpose of this flight



is to bring Palauan citizens *from* Guam *to* Palau, and not the other way around. These citizens, approximately 20 in number, were stranded on Guam by the cancellation of United Airlines inbound service, a decision that was made by United Airlines due to “low load factor.” It has never been our intention to deny entry to any Palauan, and we are looking at all options to get them home as soon as possible. For this reason, we have gone to great effort to establish emergency quarantine facilities and are trying to arrange expensive charter flights *to* Palau.

Palau did reject one United flight, on March 22, at the express recommendation of the CDC Office on Guam. After this cancellation United ran one “ferry in, passenger out” flight on March 26. This flight retrieved pre-booked passengers, the vast majority of whom were US citizens or tourists from other countries on return trips back to their homes. To our knowledge, no passenger of any nationality has traveled from Palau to Guam since March 26.

It has never been Palau’s purpose or intention to send any Palauan to Guam during this pandemic. In fact, we have banned all travel by government employees, and have consistently advised our citizens not to leave Palau. All flights – except a weekly mail and cargo flight – have been suspended for several weeks now, and we are unaware of any “continuing influx” of Palauan citizens to Guam.

With government resources so stressed in both our jurisdictions we do not want you, or the people of Guam, to think Palau is trying to shift any more trouble your way. To avoid these types of misunderstandings, we would be happy to work with you more closely as we coordinate the return of our stranded citizens. Alternatively, we would be happy to provide you with more direct updates on our efforts. If that is desirable to you, please assign an appropriate person to communicate with our Ministry of Public Infrastructure, Industries, and Commerce, which has taken the lead on the proposed charter flight and related issues.

Sincerely,



Tommy E. Remengesau, Jr.
President of the Republic of Palau

Cc: His Excellency John Hennessey-Niland
Resident Ambassador of the United States of America