

Prosecutors deny that Chen admitted flying cash to Palau

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Prosecutors yesterday denied reports that former president Chen Shui-bian (陳水扁) recently admitted using the presidential airplane to carry cash to Palau as part of his alleged money laundering.

The Chinese-language Apple Daily reported yesterday that investigators probing the former president's money-laundering case questioned officials from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and national security agencies. These officials reportedly received instructions from the former president to prepare a certain amount of money to be converted into US dollars as part of Chen's "classified diplomatic affairs."

Staff working on the presidential plane reportedly told investigators they saw many suspicious suitcases and that their contents were unclear.

It was also reported that the former president told prosecutors during a recent secret questioning session that he carried NT\$40 million (US\$1.2 million) with him on the plane on a visit to Palau in September 2006.

The Supreme Prosecutors' Office's Special Investigation Panel (SIP) said yesterday in a statement that the Apple Daily report was false and unfounded. Prosecutors said they had not questioned the former president since they last visited him at the Taipei Detention Center on May 4.

The SIP said on Wednesday that it was not probing allegations that the former president deposited a large amount of cash in the National Development Bank in Palau during his visit three years ago. It hinted, however, that other investigative units were looking into the matter.

It remains unclear as to whether the allegations relate to NT\$40 million or US\$40 million, as different rumors continue to spread.

Chen, who left office last year, stands accused of embezzling public funds, money laundering, accepting bribes on a land deal, influence peddling and forgery.

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