

Chen's son calls for his release as Palau case closed

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The son of former president Chen Shui-bian (陳水扁) yesterday pressed for his father's release after the Special Investigation Division (SID) on Wednesday said it found no evidence of wrongdoing in the so-called "Palau affair."

Chen Chih-chung (陳智中) said the charges against his father were politically motivated and should be redressed, urging the government to release the former president from prison.

"After more than five years of investigation by the SID, it has dropped the case of money-laundering in Palau against the former president because it could not find any evidence of wrongdoing. But where is Chen Shui-bian? He has been in jail for nearly six years now. His mental condition and health are deteriorating, yet the government still refuses to grant him a medical parole," Chen Chih-chung said.

Chen Chih-chung said his father had also been "found not guilty of misusing his state affairs fund and embezzling funds used by Ministry of Foreign Affairs to conduct diplomacy."

The Palau case was first reported by the Chinese-language Next Magazine in 2009. It alleged that when then-president Chen Shui-bian visited the nation's diplomatic ally Palau in September 2006, he carried US\$40 million with him on the presidential aircraft.

Next Magazine alleged that Chen Shui-bian deposited the US\$40 million in a bank in Palau, then wire-transferred the money to an account in the US for money-laundering purposes.

The SID's investigation indicated that Chen Shui-bian visited Palau twice during terms as president: in January 2005 and September 2006. Staff who accompanied the president during these visits were questioned by the SID, and all testified that they did not see Chen Shui-bian carrying the money on the presidential aircraft or engaging in activity that may be construed as money-laundering.

Banks, the judiciary agency and the Financial Intelligence Unit in Palau also indicated that the

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former president and his extended family have no bank accounts there. There was also no evidence of Chen or his extended family making a single or multiple deposits totaling up to US\$40 million, the SID investigation showed.

When questioned by the SID, the nation's ambassador to Palau at the time testified that Chen Shui-bian's visit followed the official itinerary, with he himself accompanying the president the entire time.

He also said that Chen Shui-bian did not make any banking, real-estate or other business transactions while in Palau.

Chen Shui-bian is serving 20 years' jail for accepting bribes during his eight-year presidency. He was taken into custody shortly after he stepped down in 2008.

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