

Ma mixes up nation's allies in Central America

Written by Taipei Times

Tuesday, 19 January 2010 07:00 -

President Ma Ying-jeou (馬英九) yesterday mistakenly said he would visit Costa Rica during his trip to Central American allies planned for next week.

Taiwan severed diplomatic ties with Costa Rica in June 2007 after the Central American nation switched recognition to China.

Ma said he was going to Honduras to attend the inauguration of president-elect Porfirio Lobo Sosa and that he also planned to “go to Costa Rica to see the ambassador and consul [to Haiti] who are hospitalized and have suffered serious injuries” during last week’s earthquake that devastated the Haitian capital, Port-au-Prince.

Ambassador to Haiti Hsu Mien-sheng (許敏生) suffered a fracture to his left leg during the temblor, while Consul Chi Wang-teh (齊望德) sustained head injuries, facial lacerations, a broken rib and some chest and back injuries.

Hsu and Chi are currently hospitalized in the Dominican Republic’s capital, Santo Domingo.

They were sent there to receive medical attention after being dug out of the debris.

The pair were trapped for six hours before a rescue team discovered them.

Ma said he would consider whether his visit could result in inconvenience and that he would cancel the plan if there were signs that it could.

“The most important thing is for us to send our love and resources [to Haiti],” he said.

Ma made the remarks while meeting winners of this year’s model firefighters and volunteer firefighters at the Presidential Office yesterday morning.

Ma will visit Honduras from next Monday through Jan. 30 and is weighing the possibility of -visiting the Dominican Republic to express the nation’s support for quake victims.

Ma is scheduled to make a one-night stopover in San Francisco before heading to the Honduran capital of Tegucigalpa, and is expected to make a short stopover in Los Angeles on the way back to Taiwan.

Ma yesterday made yet another slip-up when he misidentified the leader of the country’s rescue team, Lin Chien-chih (林建志), as Lin Chin-chih (林欽志).

Ma said that he was happy to have had a chance to talk with Lin on the telephone on Sunday night and that Lin told him the team had rescued a 35-year-old French UN worker.

Ma said he told Lin to stay safe, adding that “we are not afraid to risk our necks, but it will cause more trouble if accidents happen because we neglected to ensure our personal safety.”

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Meanwhile, Presidential Office Spokesman Wang Yu-chi (王郁奇) said yesterday that Ma would be happy to meet US parliamentarians and local politicians during his stopovers in the US.

Wang said Legislative Speaker Wang Jin-pyng (王金平) conveyed a request by lawmakers that as fewer US senators were visiting Taiwan, they hoped Ma could invite more US parliamentarians during his stopovers in the US.

Senior officials attending yesterday’s weekly lunch hosted by Ma at the Presidential Office also said that they hoped Ma would take advantage of his transits in the US to mend fences with Washington after the US beef controversy.

Source: [Taipei Times 2010/01/19](#)