

Those with NMD status will cast their ballots in a separate NMD box at each polling place, and if the constitutionality of the restricted voting is upheld, only their votes will be counted.

Related to the above issue are preparations for 2011 when voters will have the opportunity to amend, repeal, or retain the land alienation clause of the constitution (article XII), which restricts landownership to persons of Northern Marianas descent. Article VIII of the CNMI Covenant provides for this opportunity, and, even though the vote is not until 2011, the debate has become very heated. Free-market proponents want to at least amend the article to allow for longer-term leases, but certainly prefer to have it repealed completely; they are lining up against cultural preservation parties who feel that landownership should be retained in the hands of the indigenous people as a gesture of respect for their culture. However, since NMD status (and hence land rights) are legally determined by the 25 percent blood quantum, large-scale intermarriage between different ethnicities has diluted the indigenous population to the point where a significant number of people who currently qualify as persons of Northern Marianas descent are concerned about not being able to pass on their land to their children. Also, high on the pro-repeal agenda is the increasing evidence that foreign investment has not reached its potential in the commonwealth because investors cannot own the property they want to invest in. At most, a fifty-five-year lease is currently available for private land. This argument is particularly acute given the current economic status of the commonwealth. A legal challenge to the constitutional provision limit-

ing voting on land issues to persons of Northern Marianas descent is expected to be filed sometime in the near future, in hopes of resolving that issue before the 2011 vote on amending the land alienation clause.

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REPUBLIC OF PALAU

The major issues and events for the period under review were the campaign and election 2008; the peaceful transfer of power to a new president and his work; the efforts of the Palau National Congress (Olbiil Era Kelulau, or OEK); events in Koror; allegations of corruption; an update on the Pacific Savings Bank (PSB) failure; and Palau's relations with Taiwan, the United States, and Japan.

With President Tommy E Remengesau Jr ending his second term in office in January 2009, the presidential field was wide open, and four candidate teams emerged, as indicated in last year's review (Shuster 2009). The primary election of 23 September 2008 witnessed a 66 percent voter turnout (9,295 voters). The team of Vice President Elias Chin and Senator Alan Seid finished strongly, taking first with 3,027 votes, ahead of attorney

Johnson Toribiong and Delegate Kerai Mariur with 2,526 votes. Senate president and businessman Surangel Whipps and Billy Kuartei, chief of staff (on leave) for President Remengesau, finished third with 2,248 votes, which was a tremendous effort. What apparently hurt this team was the decision to join in the big debates and forums instead of remaining in their area of strength—small group sessions—where the two displayed an element of magnetism and charisma. Finishing last in the primary field with 1,387 votes were Senator Joshua Koshiha and Peleliu Governor Jackson Ngiraingas. A constitutional initiative passed in the 2004 election required, for the first time, that candidates run as a team rather than as separate individuals, as had been the practice in all seven previous national elections. However, voters in 2008 reversed the 2004 initiative, reestablishing separate tickets for election of the executive in 2012.

As expected, the general race on 4 November 2008 for the presidency and vice presidency was very tight. Here, Toribiong/Mariur emerged first with 5,040 votes to Chin/Seid's 4,828, a difference of just 212 votes. Interestingly, some 504 voters left their ballots blank—perhaps uncertain about what team to vote for, but still showing respect for both teams by not voting. Of Palau's 14,289 registered voters, 10,469 or 73 percent turned out to vote. The candidates realized the race would be very close and were campaigning in Honolulu, Saipan, and Guam, right up to voting day (2 November on these off-island locations). An incident on Guam generated considerable discussion: the pasting over of Billy Kuartei's image on a

large campaign billboard with a small Toribiong-Mariur poster. The issue got sorted out after some time. A few irregularities regarding ballots also took place on Guam, but these were honest mistakes by the Palau Election Commission and were resolved.

The Senate race provided a huge surprise and was the talk of Palau. Surangel Whipps Jr, who had chosen not to run for the Senate but to assist his father in his presidential bid, came first among the forty-three candidates at the primary level with an astounding 6,709 votes as a write-in candidate. After the primary, he had a brief six weeks to campaign but did so wisely, taking the advice of his father. Of course, Whipps Jr benefited from the good name of Whipps Sr, who ran first in the 2000 and 2004 Senate races. One might call it some special magic, but it worked. The other twelve winners in the Senate included, in order, Raynold Oilouch, a well-known attorney (6,392 votes); Mlib Tmetuchl, a popular incumbent (5,646 votes); Joel Toribiong, an incumbent from the House (5,403 votes); Kathy Kesolei, a well-known personality (5,240 votes); Mark Rudimch, from a high-ranking Koror family (5,106 votes); Hokkons Baules, an incumbent (4,634 votes); Adalbert Eledui, a well-known Koror person (4,128 votes); Regina Mesebeluu, a retired teacher (3,938 votes); Alfonso Diaz, radio and television personality (3,809 votes); Tommy Remengesau Jr, the sitting president who would be out of office on 15 January 2009 (3,772 votes); Regis Akitaya (3,319 votes); and Paul Ueki (3,211 votes). Of the senators, two are female, and only four have previous congressional experience, making the senators mostly freshmen.

Remengesau ran a distant eleventh because of criticism that he had allegedly used the presidency to enrich himself while, after eight years in office, he failed to move Palau materially toward economic self-sufficiency.

A similar situation characterizes the sixteen-seat House of Delegates. It has an amazing total of thirteen freshmen, with the only incumbents being Noah Idechong, Kalistus Ngirturong, and Jonathan Isechal. A few of the House races were close. In Ngarchelong State, Marhence Madrangchar, a 2005 Constitutional Convention delegate, defeated Faustina Rehuher-Marugg, director of the Belau National Museum, 203 to 191; Dilmai Saiske finished third with 188 votes, and Don Bukurou finished last with 164. In Melekeok State, out of four candidates, newcomer Lencer Basilius from a prominent Babeldaob family garnered 176 votes; F Kazuo Asanuma, former congressman and reportedly in line for the distinguished title of *Reklai* (one of two paramount chiefs in Palau), finished a distant third with 89 votes. But Ngchesar State had six candidates competing to represent the people. Moses Uludong, well-known publisher of the *Tia Belau News* and a senator in the first Olbiil Era Kelulau, was surprisingly defeated by freshman Secilil Eldebechel by just 15 votes, 118 to 103. And finally, in Koror, with the largest number of registered voters of Palau's sixteen states, Alexander Merep, a minister in Remengesau's administration and a member of a socially high Koror clan, easily defeated two opponents, taking 1,929 votes to their 751 and 402.

In late November, both houses of the National Congress selected their leaders, who would be sworn

into office in January. In the Senate, Mlib Temtuchl, who served as vice president in the previous Senate, was chosen as president; Kathy Kesolei, community activist and from a high clan in Melekeok, was selected as vice president; and attorney Raynold Oilouch was named as floor leader. On the House of Delegates side, former vice speaker and environmentalist Noah Idechong was selected as Speaker; Alexander Merep was chosen as vice speaker; and newcomer Gibson Kanai, a former Speaker of the Ngaraard State Legislature, took the floor leader's position.

In 2005, Palau's second Constitutional Convention (Con-Con) of twenty-five members approved 22 amendments (out of some 250 proposals) to the 1979 constitution, and the Olbiil Era Kelulau added one more. These all appeared on the November 2008 ballot and were well phrased for an easy "yes" or "no" response. Dr Patrick Tellei, president of Palau Community College and member of the Con-Con education group, prepared a practice card listing all 23 amendments (including the one added by the OEK). He had some 18,000 copies of the card printed and widely distributed. The card must have persuaded people to think and talk about the amendments, and it speeded up the voting as well.

As a measure of the unpopularity of the executive joint ticket and the congressional three-term limit requirements that were on the ballot for 2004, at least with the twenty-five Con-Con members, these amendments failed to be approved in 2008 by the Palau electorate. Surprisingly, the amendment allowing land to be leased for up to ninety-nine years was

accepted by the voters. Palauans also accepted a trial-by-jury amendment and the restriction of membership on the Judicial Nominating Commission to Palauan citizens only (the one OEK amendment). The one amendment that was turned down by the voters would have allowed noncitizens who are adopted by Palauan citizens before the age of three to petition to become naturalized Palauan citizens on their reaching the age of majority. The decision to oppose this amendment perhaps reflects a desire to keep citizenship exclusive.

The ninety-nine-year lease issue was very controversial in Palau recently. The exact language states, “While non-citizens may not acquire title to land, Palauan Citizens may lease land in Palau to non-citizens or corporations wholly owned by non-citizens for up to 99 years.” This amendment seems to favor large foreign corporations that may wish to make sizable investments in Palau and is a sign that some people in Palau want to attract big investors. However, the ninety-nine-year period is going against the trend of Pacific Island nations that have limited foreign leases to between thirty and fifty years. (See Shuster 2006, 120, for more information on the 2005 Con-Con.)

For the very first time, President Toribiong and Vice President Mariur were inaugurated into office at the new national capitol in Ngerulmud, Melekeok. Built with about \$36 million in support from the Republic of China/Taiwan, this structure is very impressive, and the inauguration was impressive as well, with visitors from Guam, the United States, Taiwan, Japan, the Philippines, and the Federated States of Micronesia, among

others. President Toribiong’s inaugural speech centered on the theme of self-sufficiency; priorities of improving education, health care, and the environment; appreciation to Japan, Taiwan, and the United States for critical assistance; making the Palau-US Compact a success story; admonitions for contemporary Palauans to work hard like the Palauans of old; honest business dealings and foreign investment; and making Palau a model of democracy (TB, 19–25 Jan 2009, 6, 15). After the inaugural festivities, Toribiong got to work, nominating and getting his cabinet ministers confirmed by the Senate. These included Sandra S Pierantozzi (minister of state), Johnny Gibbons (justice), Harry Fritz (natural resources and tourism), Jackson Ngiraingas (public infrastructure), Vice President Mariur (finance,) Dr Stevenson Kuartei (health), Masa-aki Emesiochel (education), and Faustina Rehuher-Marugg (community and cultural affairs). As one might expect, some of these ministerial appointments were based on talent and ability, others on political support.

President Toribiong also made several state visits early on. In late February, he went to Taiwan, where he had held an ambassadorship from 2001–2008, and where he was welcomed with all the pomp and ceremonies of a state visit. The new Palau president said to President Ma that Taiwan’s support had helped Palau immensely, and Ma thanked Palau for its efforts in assisting Taiwan with its United Nations and World Health Organization applications. Toribiong’s second trip, in mid-March, was to the United States. After visiting a number of important monuments, memorials, and graves, the president had a

session with Secretary of State Hillary Clinton. Reportedly, Mrs Clinton was open to the idea of an extension of the financial terms of the compact for one year, and in April, she wrote to the president that “the United States is working hard to be in a position to commence the formal review called for in the Compact, and [that the US] position on any extension of grant assistance, programs, or services will be part of that effort” (quoted in Toribiong 2009, 6). After the carefree spending years of the Remengesau administration, it appears that President Toribiong is being very careful to spend his funding frugally and to nail down interim compact funding for fiscal year 2010 (year 16 of the compact) at the fiscal year 2009 rate. Finally, Toribiong visited Japan in April to meet Prime Minister Taro Asao and cabinet members, and again in May for the PALM 5 (Pacific Area Leaders Meeting) in Hokkaido, where the agenda consisted mainly of environmental issues and Japan’s commitment to assist the Pacific Island nations in meeting the challenges of climate change, alternate sources of energy, and technology transfer. While PALM has met every three years since 1997, the Pacific Islands Forum leaders (fourteen Pacific Island nations plus Australia and New Zealand) agreed to gather in 2010 to follow up on the progress of cooperation agreements with Japan.

Besides foreign state visits, President Toribiong stayed busy with Palau affairs. He accepted fifteen computers with software and training from the Republic of China/Taiwan for the Bureau of Immigration, Ministry of Justice. Ambassador Maggie Tien

was pleased to make the presentation of this important equipment and associated training for use in tracking visitors. In April, the nation’s main electrical power system crashed, and many areas of Koror town suffered blackouts and brownouts. In response, the president established an emergency task force to carefully study the situation and make recommendations. He also hired a specialist using contacts in the US Department of Interior for a second opinion. Both sources came to the same conclusion: that all the problems were avoidable and that the board and top management were negligent. President Toribiong accepted the resignations of several board members and the general manager before replacing them. Since these changes were made, the delivery of electrical power has improved, and the utilities corporation is planning to purchase two new generators (*TB*, 22–28 June 2009, 3, 14).

Budget matters are a major concern for the president. He inherited a fiscal year 2009 budget of \$58.7 million but faces a shortage of approximately \$6 million, according to Vice President and Minister of Finance Mariur. On taking office on 15 January 2009, the new president and vice president faced a deficit of over \$4 million and, more seriously, they recognized that nearly 40 percent of the current budget had already been spent by the previous administration in just three and a half months, October 2008 to January 2009 (*TB*, 15–21 June 2009, 2).

In communications with the Olbiil Era Kelulau, Toribiong reminded the senators that he needs to review all treaties prior to Senate action. Apparently the UN Convention against

Corruption, which had died with the previous congress, was revived by the Senate without the new president's knowledge or input. The Palau Constitution requires that the president shall "conduct negotiations with foreign nations and to make treaties with the advice and consent of the Olbiil Era Kelulau." On other matters, the National Congress asked the president to pull together a comprehensive and effective energy plan for the nation that would include renewable sources, such as solar, wind, ocean currents, and ocean temperature differentials. Regarding plans, President Toribiong requested that all citizens attend a forum in early June to provide community input on the Medium Term Development Strategy, which stresses development and support for island-based small businesses.

A nagging and very serious issue for the president and Minister of Justice John Gibbons is the M-14 assault rifle that went missing from the police inventory in late 2008. The high-powered gun was last seen in the car trunk of former President Remengesau. The reward for its return and information leading to the arrest and successful conviction of the person(s) responsible has been increased from \$5,000 to \$20,000. President Toribiong has requested assistance from the US FBI in locating this dangerous weapon, which was still missing as of June 30. This is a very serious matter because firearms are constitutionally prohibited from being privately owned in Palau, and the nation has a frightful history of firearm deaths.

Finally, Toribiong has placed under his office the ombudsman, special prosecutor, and attorney general.

These three offices, along with the Ministry of State and Ethics Commission, conducted an important "Seminar on Transparency, Good Governance, Accountability, and Rule of Law" in late April. On the occasion of the visit of Greg Andrews, the assistant ombudsman of New South Wales, Australia, the seminar was held to inform national and state officials and employees of the roles and functions of the three offices as prescribed by Palau's various laws (*PH*, 28–30 April 2009, 5). Earlier in the month, a researcher from the Pacific Islands Forum carried out a project on good (and bad) leadership as a way of identifying, among other things, corruption (*TB*, 20–26 April 2009, 7).

One of the purposes of the transparency seminar was to put a damper on alleged corruption in Palau. In what appears to have been a "sweet-heart arrangement," the former minister of finance in the Remengesau administration had agreed with former President Kuniwo Nakamura to reduce the tax liability of the Palau Marine Industry Corporation (PMIC) from \$5.7 million to \$1.2 million, if the latter amount was paid in full by 15 November 2008. This was after the Palau court had found PMIC liable for taxes, interest, and penalties. PMIC also owed the government thousands of dollars for landing fees, space rentals, and departure taxes (*TB*, 18–24 July 2008, 1). However, by 24 December 2008, PMIC was found in default of its agreement to pay the gross revenue tax judgment in Civil Action case 06-205. The government revoked the company's fishing license and ordered PMIC to immediately stop all business operations (*PH*, 6–8 Jan 2009,

1). In a second case, Governor Kodep of Melekeok State signed an affidavit admitting his theft of money and misconduct while in public office (*PH*, 24–27 April 2009, 1), and is willing to take full responsibility for his wrongdoing. Third, an audit of Hatohobei State books by the acting public auditor has uncovered seventeen deficiencies in the use of state funds for the period of 1999–2006 (*TB*, 18–24 May 2009, 1). Fourth, Minister of Health Kuartei was charged by the special prosecutor with reckless driving and driving his vehicle under the influence of alcohol. These charges are based on an affidavit of probable cause submitted by the special prosecutor's investigator, Brenda Santos (*PH*, 24–27 April 2009, 1). In what is alleged to be a clear violation of Palau's procurement law and regulations, and without public knowledge, announcement, and bidding, former President Remengesau, via directive 8-4, issued in January 2009 an exclusive airport screening contract for five years to the Belau Airport Security Company, a company owned and controlled by former President Nakamura (*TB*, 5–11 Jan 2009, 1, 15). Finally, investigators from the Office of Special Prosecutor arrested Russell Masayos, chief of the Labor Division, on suspicion of bribery, cheating, and misconduct in office. Charges against Masayos have been filed in court; he has a lawyer and spent one day in jail (*TB*, 22–28 June 2009, 1, 15).

Minister of State Sandra Pierantozzi was in New York to file a claim with the United Nations on Palau's behalf for an extended continental shelf. While there, she executed diplomatic relations with government representa-

tives of Finland and Morocco. Prior to this, Palau had established relations with Kosovo. In other foreign affairs, Minister Pierantozzi facilitated the annual talks between Palau and Australia regarding marine surveillance and Palau's patrol boat activities.

Japan continued to be a good friend to Palau by signing a coral reef monitoring project agreement with the Palau International Coral Reef Center and providing a two-year financial grant for the continued development of fisheries activities. The Japan government received permission from Palau to carry out further research on Pacific War (World War II) soldiers' remains on Peleliu, with the purpose of repatriating the potentially numerous remains to Japan. Funded by Japan and with a grand ribbon cutting, the \$13 million Koror/Airai arterial road-resurfacing project was completed and opened in March. In a smaller but very important project, Japan provided funding to expand training for women at Palau's Organization for Industrial, Spiritual and Cultural Advancement center, which began in 1990 at Nekken, Aimeliik State. Palau's Dr Minoru Ueki, on hand for this event, has been an active supporter of the organization for many years and recently was appointed by President Toribiong as ambassador to Japan.

In other relations with the United States, the mammoth aircraft carrier *USS George Washington* was in Palau's waters long enough for President Toribiong and twenty officials to be picked up by helicopter and flown out to the huge ship for a visit. In midyear, Sergeant Jasper Obakrairur, 26, of Ngardmau State, died in the

Afghanistan war and was honored with a state funeral at the rotunda of Palau's National Congress building. In the prior year, thirty-three Palauan and FSM young people enlisted in the US military; former Vice President Elias Chin administered the oath of enlistment. In early May 2009, the new US Embassy building opened its doors in Airai State. The Eighth Olbiil Era Kelulau provided a congratulatory resolution to commemorate the event.

After some minor sparring with the former president, review of the Palau-US Compact got underway in May with a meeting between Alcy Frelick (director of the Office of Australia, New Zealand and Pacific Affairs at the US Department of State) and Ambassador Joshua Koshiba, who continued the formal review process according to section 432 of the 1994 agreement. In addition to consensus on general principles, they agreed to address nuts-and-bolts issues in Washington DC in early June and in Honolulu in early July 2009. It is important for Palau to get some movement on the compact issue because operational funding beyond 30 September 2009 has been agreed to only in principle.

In the background to the Palau-US Compact relationship is the June 2009 request by the United States for the temporary resettlement in Palau of up to seventeen Uyghurs, a Turkic people from Xinjiang province in western China. These individuals have been detained at Guantanamo Bay since late 2001, but the US State Department issued a final determination that they are not enemy combatants. This issue caught international media attention and put Palau in the evening news and on front pages of newspapers.

President Toribiong has stressed the humanitarian aspect of the situation and the fact that Palau culturally and traditionally assists oppressed people. Palau currently has eleven Myanmar (Burmese) nationals who have requested political asylum in Australia via Palau. The eleven were interviewed by an officer from the UN High Commissioner for Refugees, Australia, and have been granted special temporary visas by President Toribiong. The Uyghurs have lawyers and rights; four agreed to be relocated to Bermuda, and one has expressed some interest in Palau. Seeing Palauans may warm their hearts toward Palau, but twelve have yet to make up their minds. Their returning to China is out of the question, and some one hundred countries have reportedly turned down US requests for relocation. Before making his final decision and extending the welcome mat, President Toribiong consulted with Palau's traditional chiefs, his ministers, and the OEK leadership, and sent a small delegation of several high-ranking officials to Guantanamo (see *PDN* 23 June 2009, 8; *PSN* 28 June 2009, 8). Now, it all depends on the Uyghurs.

The 29 OEK seats are now filled by 21 rookies and just 8 veteran lawmakers. The National Congress does not have much to boast about after two regular sessions of twenty-five days each, ending the second session in mid-May with just five bills sent to President Toribiong. Four of the five bills were signed into law: RPPL 8-1, the Uniform Compensation Act, establishes a pay structure for compensating the congressmen \$50,000 annually; RPPL 8-2, the 2009 unified budget law, totals \$58.7 million; RPPL

8-3 establishes the Palau National Framework on Early Childhood; and RPPL 8-4 expands the number of official ports of entry to include locations on Peleliu and Angaur.

The lawmakers have been criticized by members of the public for their alleged irresponsible travel to various places (eg, South Korea and the Philippines). Some visits have a clear connection to lawmaking while others do not, and still other trips set up potential conflicts of interest. Former Senator Santy Asanuma recently expressed his worry that OEK members were engaged in “excessive travel spending.” He noted that “we need the little money that we can save to buy medicines for our hospital, books for our schools, and repair our failing sewers” (*TB*, 22–28 June 2009, 8, 10). The general criticism—that lawmaking does not require travel of six- to ten-member delegations—is fair because legislative research can be done on the Internet, and the executive branch also has a research responsibility and brings more tools to the table. Another matter that has caught public attention is the House’s approval of a casino gambling bill. Despite talk about various controls and the revenue potential of casinos, this bill has sent alarm signals to churches and women’s groups, who will no doubt mobilize against it. Furthermore, the bill raises conflict-of-interest allegations because a group of legislators traveled to South Korea at the invitation of a Korean businessman, a certain Kim Jae Hong, who wants to invest \$30 million in gambling facilities in Koror or Airai (*TB*, 11–17 May 2009, 1, 15).

Palau’s most alarming case of

theft, deceit, and criminality finally came to trial in January 2009. Emory Mesubed, former vice president and operations manager of the Pacific Savings Bank, was charged with money laundering, forgery, and cheating, in connection with one million dollars of Palau government pension funds that were improperly transferred to the bank. In spite of the prosecution’s forty-eight documents and four witnesses, three of whom were experts giving lengthy testimonies, Mesubed was acquitted. During the trial, it was reported that the bank was \$11 million insolvent and that some 80 percent of its value was in loans made to bank insiders such as Mesubed, who had received \$380,000 in loans (*TB*, 19–25 Jan 2009, 1). The mastermind behind the bank’s collapse, “Mack” Timothy Taunton, bolted from Palau the day after the failure and is being actively sought in New Zealand, Australia, and other countries. Independent Counsel Lewis Harley and PSB Receiver Kaleb Udui filed a motion for default judgment in February with the Palau court. This was based on an earlier complaint (October 2007) for damages of \$22.8 million against Taunton and other former officials of the bank. Until Taunton is found and returned to Palau for trial, court actions will continue to be handicapped. In the meantime, land and other properties belonging to Taunton and Mesubed are being sold to recover funds for eventually repaying the depositors who lost large sums of money (*TB*, 4–10 July 2008, 7; 9–15 Feb 2009, 4).

Palau lost some important people during the period under review. Mirair Ltelatk Fritz, the most senior member

of her clan and second highest woman chief of Koror State, passed away on 12 August 2008. Klerang Tmetuchl Ueki, daughter of Roman Tmetuchl and a gold medal winner at the 1969 Micronesian Games, died on 17 August at just 55 years of age. Ueki's survivors include her husband (a former congressman) and four children. Balerio Pedro, holding the title *Uherbelau*, passed away in late August. He was Angaur's highest chief at the time of his passing and attended high school at Father Dueñas on Guam and university in both the Philippines and California. Lyola Koteldil Mesebeluu died tragically in Honolulu at just 27, viciously attacked by a deranged individual. Elia Tulop, 63, former governor of Ngiwal State and a national congressman, passed away in early November. DeWill Reklai, age 15, was hit by a drunken driver and tragically killed while returning home by bicycle. A great outpouring of sympathy and emotion took place when a monument to Reklai was unveiled at the site of the accident along Koror's main road. Early in 2009, *Adelbairesowaol* Jones Ngoriakl passed away at age 62, survived by four sisters, his wife, and three children. Rita Olsudong, Palau's only professional archeologist, who had earned a bachelor's degree from the University of Guam and a master's from LaTrobe University in Australia, passed away on 30 March. She was just 43 and was a gifted natural resource person. *Ngetibuchel* Sophia Belechel Kemaitelong, 74, passed away on 3 April. Amazingly knowledgeable, Kemaitelong was a founding member of Mechesil Belau (Palau Women's Association) and was frequently sought out for mediation

and dispute resolution advice regarding land and traditional matters and for speaking and chanting at public events. She was a national treasure. As already noted, Sergeant Jasper K Obakrairur, US Army, died in Afghanistan. With numerous awards and decorations, including the Army Good Conduct Medal, Jasper was the third Palauan to die in the Iraq and Afghanistan conflicts.

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