



EMBASSY OF THE  
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**Micronesian US Army Specialist Bermanis Receives President George W. Bush and  
First Lady Laura Bush on 9/11**

Washington, D.C. - President George W. Bush and First Lady Laura Bush visited Hilario Bermanis II and other wounded soldiers at the Walter Reed Army Medical Center yesterday, in conjunction with the September 11<sup>th</sup> anniversary ceremonies that were held throughout the US yesterday and in the nation's capitol,.

The President expressed his gratitude and thanks for the service and sacrifice that Bermanis has given for this country and the fine example of courage he portrays of all the other Micronesian citizens who serve in the US Armed Forces and who are willing to fight for freedom and democracy. In addition to the words of encouragement he had to offer, the President presented Bermanis with a presidential coin. Mr. Bermanis, in return, gave the President and First Lady, lapel pins with the flags of the United States and the Federated States of Micronesia and brochures of the Federated States of Micronesia, with an invitation to one day visit him on his home island of Pohnpei.

Hilario Bermanis, Sr. expressed his appreciation to the President for the good care that they have received from the Walter Reed doctors and personnel, especially Dr. Donald A. Gajewski, who performed surgery on his son and Ms. Barbara Green of the Red Cross. He also complimented the Charge of the US Embassy in Micronesia, Thomas Hushek, and his staff for their speedy and efficient work in reuniting the parents with their wounded son. Bermanis father also expressed his appreciation for his son's fellow soldiers, especially those whose rapid response to Bermanis, when he was first wounded, were believed to have helped save his life.

President Bush said he was proud and honored to be a soon-to-be fellow American with Specialist Bermanis who will be receiving US citizenship in a special ceremony at Walter Reed Hospital on the 17<sup>th</sup> of September. The ceremony is being organized by the Secretary of Veteran's Affairs, Mr. Anthony Principi and his staff.

Mr. Bermanis has also received visits from many army friends from Fort Bragg, North Carolina, including the wives of his company commander and company 1<sup>st</sup> sergeant. A mother of a fellow soldier in Iraq, Mrs. Susan Kennedy Witt, drove all the way from Ohio to visit Bermanis in Washington, D.C. Other visitors to Mr. Bermanis have included the Secretary of Defense, Mr. Donald H. Rumsfeld, Chairman of the Joint

Chiefs of Staff, General Richard B. Myers and Mrs. Myers, General George W. Casey, Director of Joint Staff, the Acting Secretary of the Army, Mr. Les Brownlee, Assistant Secretary of Defense (Health Matters) William Winkenwerder, Jr., Congressman Tim Ryan and Mrs. Ryan, Congresswoman Betty McCollum, Congressman Frank Wolf, Congressman Bill Young and Mrs. Young among many others. The family has very much appreciated all the goodwill and generosity that they and their son Hilario have received from their visitors, Walter Reed personnel and Fisher House personnel since their arrival in June.

For the President's visit, Hilario Bermanis was accompanied by his father Hilario Bermanis, Sr. and family friend and embassy staff, Tanya Harris for this very special occasion. His mother, Clarise Bermanis, was visiting their daughter in Cincinnati, Ohio where Micronesians were having a Micronesian-American celebration. September 11<sup>th</sup> is celebrated in Pohnpei and in Micronesian communities in the US in commemoration of liberation from the Japanese occupation during World War II.

Mr. Bermanis is being fitted for prosthetics and is well on his way to recovery. He received an automated wheelchair from the US Secretary of Veterans Affairs and has been able to get around the hospital and grounds of the Walter Reed Facility. Mr. Bermanis is still considering his options for the future but has mentioned pursuing his education once he is fully healed.

NOTE: There are approximately 1000 FSM citizens in the US Armed Services (total FSM population is roughly 107,000). During Desert Storm/Gulf War in 1991 (just as the FSM was joining the international community through UN membership), the FSM had among the highest per capita enlistment of any other allied nation that participated. These FSM armed services enlistments are made possible through the unique Compact relationship which terminated the US trusteeship over the FSM in 1986, and which is currently being extended for the next twenty years through House Joint Res. 63 and Senate Joint Resolution 16 being considered by the Congress at this time. Adoption of the new Compact agreement must be completed by 30 September 2003.

For more information please contact Tanya H. Joshua at the FSM Embassy at (202) 223-4383