



# Management protocols eyed for safe return of OFWs

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**MANILA** – To ensure the health and safety of all overseas Filipino workers (OFWs) who wish to return home, the Inter-Agency Task Force for the Management of Emerging Infectious Diseases (IATF-EID) has ordered a sub-task unit to prepare protocols for the management and surveillance of repatriates.

Presidential Spokesperson Harry Roque made this remark a week after the IATF established the National Task Force - Sub-Task Unit (STU) for the repatriation of OFWs amid the coronavirus disease 2019 (Covid-19) pandemic.

*“Yung (The) National Task Force - Sub Task Group for Repatriation of Overseas Filipino Workers ay naatasan nang gumawa ng protocols para po sa management and surveillance ng mga repatriated land-based and sea-based OFWs pag dumating na po sila sa ating bayan at matapos po ng mandated quarantine period (The NTF-ST group has been directed to craft protocols for the management and surveillance of repatriated land- and sea-based OFWs returning to our country after the mandated quarantine period),”* Roque said in a virtual presser.

Under current Covid-19 protocol, repatriates will temporarily stay in Manila to undergo mandatory quarantine before returning to their respective hometowns.

Repatriates could also be tested using rapid anti-body tests after they enter quarantine facilities and undergo the 14-day quarantine.

The arrangement for the accommodations is provided for in Republic Act 11469 or the Bayanihan to Heal as One Act of 2020.

Costs of the accommodation may be shouldered by the Overseas Workers Welfare Administration (OWWA), other national government agencies, the OFWs' recruiting agencies, or the OFWs themselves, as may be applicable.

During their quarantine, the OFWs are confined to their assigned single-occupancy, fully furnished rooms, complete with sanitation and hygiene kits, as cleared by authorized personnel of the Department of Health - Bureau of Quarantine (DOH-BOQ).

The STU is composed of the OWWA as chair, and the departments of labor, health, foreign affairs, interior, tourism, and transportation as members.

Members of the unit also include the Philippine National Police, the Philippine Coast Guard, the Bureau of Quarantine, and other agencies as may be determined by the National Task Force against Covid-19.

About 18,000 OFWs have been repatriated since February, the Department of Foreign Affairs has said.

As of Monday, it said a total of 984 Filipinos abroad have tested positive for Covid-19. These cases include 140 deaths, 259 recoveries, and 585 who are still undergoing treatment, it added.

The Philippines has 6,599 confirmed cases, including 437 deaths and 654 recoveries.

Global cases have reached about 2.6 million while more than 180,000 have died and 784,000 have recovered. **(PNA)**

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