

# PRESS RELEASE

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## **BI orders stricter screening of aliens with temporary visitor's visas**

Bureau of Immigration (BI) officers in the different international airports have been ordered to thoroughly screen arriving foreigners despite having 9(a) temporary visitor's visas and entry exemption documents to make sure that they have valid and legitimate purposes in visiting the country.

A memorandum order issued recently by BI Commissioner Jaime Morente reminded immigration inspectors manning the ports to conduct strict arrival formalities on arriving passengers despite having the required documents.

The memorandum was addressed to the heads bureau's port operations division (POD), which supervises primary inspectors assigned at the airports' immigration counters, and the intelligence division and travel control and enforcement unit (TCEU), which handles the secondary inspection of arriving aliens.

Morente's order stemmed from last month's interception of several Chinese nationals who arrived in the country with entry visas and entry exemption documents, who turned out to have misrepresented their purpose in traveling to the Philippines.

"Aside from giving inconsistent answers during interview, the passengers were also not able to establish their connection to companies that invited them to visit the Philippines," said Fortunato Manahan Jr., chief of the BI intelligence division which supervises the TCEU.

Manahan clarified that arriving alien tourists, despite having entry exemption documents, may still be required further proof of purpose and assessed to determine the legitimacy of their travel. "Misrepresentation will result in the denial of entry of these passengers, and they will be excluded and booked on the first flight back to their port of origin," Manahan said.

"They will also be blacklisted and banned from re-entering the country for being public charges," he added.

It will be recalled that last Feb. 17, BI officers at the NAIA 1 barred the entry of 17 Chinese nationals for failure to establish their connection to a tech company that purportedly sponsored their trip.

Sixteen of the passengers arrived aboard a Pan Pacific Airlines flight from Zhengzhou, China while the other one was aboard a Philippine Airlines flight from Bangkok.

BI-TCEU personnel who interviewed them said the passengers failed to establish their purpose of travel and gave highly conflicting statements, thus they were denied entry.

Morente clarified that entry exemption documents do not exempt arriving passengers from regular immigration scrutiny. “The entry exemption document is not a free pass to enter the country,” said Morente. “It’s a documentary requirement set by the IATF (Inter-Agency Task Force for Emerging Infectious Diseases) for aliens arriving under a temporary visitor’s visas, but their entry is still subject to immigration inspection,” he clarified.