

CREATING AN INTER-AGENCY COMMITTEE TO RESOLVE ISSUES AND CONCERNS INVOLVING ALL REMAINING VIETNAMESE NATIONALS IN THE PHILIPPINES

ADMINISTRATIVE ORDER NO. 44, December 21, 1998

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WHEREAS, the Vietnamese boat people who arrived in the Philippines after March 21, 1989 were found to be economic migrants, not genuine asylum-seekers and should, therefore, return to their country of origin, the Socialist Republic of Vietnam;

WHEREAS, the Philippine Government has agreed to accommodate the request of the United States of America to use the Philippines as a transit point for the resettlement of the United States of Vietnamese nationals under the Orderly Departure Program (ODP);

WHEREAS, a number of these Vietnamese nationals under the ODP were found to be ineligible for admission into the United States under US laws and are now “stranded” in the Philippines owing to the Government of Vietnam’s refusal to receive them back;

WHEREAS, the boat people and those under the ODP constitute all the Remaining Vietnamese Nationals (RVNs) in the Philippines;

WHEREAS, these boat people have not opted for voluntary repatriation and instead has sought permanent residency status;

WHEREAS, the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) and the Catholic Church, represented by the Catholic Bishops Conference of the Philippines (CBCP), have entered into a Memorandum of Understanding placing the boat people under the probationary custody of the CBCP pending the adoption of a durable solution to the problem;

WHEREAS, it is in the interest of the Philippines that the RVNs return to their homeland or be resettled in other countries;

WHEREAS, there is an urgent need to provide a durable and acceptable solution to the issues and concerns surrounding the RVNs in the Philippines;

NOW, THEREFORE, I, JOSEPH EJERCITO ESTRADA, President of the Philippines, by virtue of the powers vested in me by law, do hereby order:

Section 1. There is hereby created an Inter-Agency Committee to address and resolve issues concerning all remaining Vietnamese nationals in the Philippines. It shall be composed of representatives from the Office of the President, Department of Foreign Affairs, Department of Justice, Department of Social Welfare and Development, Department of Trade and Industry and the Bureau of Immigration. The Chairman of the Committee will be the representative of the Department of Justice. The Committee shall meet at the call of the Chairman.

Sec. 2. The Committee is hereby authorized to call upon any department, bureau, office, agency or instrumentality

of the Government for such assistance it may need in the discharge of its duties and functions and in the effective implementation of this Order.

Sec. 3. All executive issuances, orders, rules and regulations and/or similar issuances inconsistent with this Administrative Order are hereby revoked, amended or modified accordingly.

Sec. 4. This Administrative Order shall take effect immediately.

Done in the City of Manila, this 21[st] day of DECEMBER, in the year of our Lord, nineteen hundred and ninety-eight.

(Sgd.) JOSEPH EJERCITO ESTRADA

President of the Philippines

By the President:

(Sgd.) RONALDO B. ZAMORA

Executive Secretary

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