

CREATING A TASK FORCE ON INTERNATIONAL REFUGEE ASSISTANCE AND ADMINISTRATION, PROVIDING FUNDS THEREFOR AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES

EXECUTIVE ORDER NO. 554, August 21, 1979

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WHEREAS, in accordance with simple humanity the Filipino people and their government are ready to render assistance in the processing of refugees specially from Vietnam;

WHEREAS, as a responsible member of the United Nations, this country has supported UN efforts to assist refugees provided such support is consistent with international law and practice and the Philippines' national laws and interests;

WHEREAS, the United Nations High Commission for Refugees has sought the cooperation of the Philippine government in the temporary lodging of such refugees prior to their final resettlement in other countries and the Philippines has agreed to set up such a processing center provided that costs shall not be borne by the Philippines and there will be no residual refugees left in such processing center;

NOW, THEREFORE, I, FERDINAND, E. MARCOS, President of the Philippines, by virtue of the powers vested in me by law, and in order to effect the needed assistance to refugees reaching the Philippines, do hereby order:

SECTION 1. It is hereby declared that for the purpose of complying with the Philippines' duty to humanity and its commitment to assist legitimate projects and programs of the United Nations, the Philippines should create and activate a group that will respond to the request of the United Nations High Commission for Refugees.

SECTION 2. To achieve the above, there is hereby created a Task Force on Refugee Assistance and Administration under the Ministry of Human Settlements.

a. The Task Force shall be composed of the Minister of Human Settlements as Chairman and the following as members:

- (1) Minister of Foreign Affairs
- (2) Minister of National Defense
- (3) Minister of Public Works
- (4) Minister of Public Highways
- (5) Minister of Local Government and Community Development
- (6) Minister of Natural Resources
- (7) Minister of Health
- (8) Minister of Agriculture
- (9) Minister of Education and Culture
- (10) Minister of Transportation and Communications
- (11) Acting Minister of Social Services and Development

b. The Task Force shall be assisted by a Secretariat to be headed by the Deputy Minister of Human Settlements

with the Deputy Minister of Public Works, Flag Officer in Command of the Philippine Navy and the General Manager of the National Housing Authority as members.

c. The Minister-Members may designate their respective representatives to the Task Force provided the designated representatives are empowered to decide and/or act on their Ministers' behalf.

d. The specific functions, duties and powers of the Task Force are as follows:

(1) To establish, build and administer such refugee processing centers and camps as have been chosen by the President.

(2) To coordinate and cooperate with the United Nations High Commission for Refugees efforts and activities of the Philippine government relative to assistance to refugees and operation and management of the refugee centers and camps established in the Philippines.

(3) To receive, administer and utilize funds, equipment and other forms of assistance provided by the UNHCR, friendly countries and institutions and other international refugee-assistance institutions in the Philippines' program for refugee assistance and management.

(4) To integrate and supervise a working staff that will undertake the Philippines' program for refugee assistance and management; provided that as much as possible, the participating agencies shall contribute manpower, material and fiscal resources needed to support the working staff.

(5) To call upon any department, ministry, bureau, office or agency or instrumentality of the government for such assistance as it may require in the performance of its duties and functions.

(6) To submit periodic reports to the Philippine government and to the United Nations, through the President, on its activities; including the disposition of funds and other assistance received from the United Nations and other international refugee – assistance institutions.

SECTION 3. The Chairman of the Task Force shall –

(a) preside over meetings of the Task Force;

(b) receive gifts or donations in whatever form and from whatever source;

(c) administer, obligate, and disburse appropriations, gifts, or donations upon approval by the members of the Task Force; and

(d) hire and maintain such working group, staff or personal as may be necessary to carry out the purposes and objectives of the Task Force.

SECTION 4. The Chairman of the Task Force may constitute continuing ad hoc committee consisting of the members of the Task Force and such other experts as are necessary to assist the Task Force in the discharge of its functions.

SECTION 5. As initial steps to immediately get the Task Force operational:

(1) Tara Island and Ulugan Bay in the province of Palawan are hereby designated as refugee processing centers and camps.

(2) The General Manager of the National Housing Authority, an attached agency of the Ministry of Human Settlements, is hereby designated project coordinator for the immediate establishment, construction and operation of the said refugee camps.

(3) The Flag Officer in Command of the Philippine Navy is hereby directed to assist the Task Force by providing ferry service for materials, men and equipment needed to construct and operate the refugee camps.

(4) The Deputy Minister of Public Works is hereby designated in charge of the construction of the refugee camps in Palawan.

SECTION 6. This Executive Order shall take effect immediately.

DONE in the City of Manila, this 21st day of August in the year of Our Lord, nineteen hundred and seventy-nine.

(SGD.) FERDINAND E. MARCOS

President of the Philippines

By the President:

(SGD.) JACOBO C. CLAVE

Presidential Executive Assistant

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