

Last Batch of Repatriates from Haiti Arrive Today

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05 February 2010--The Department of Foreign Affairs (DFA) welcomed the last batch of 32 Filipinos repatriated from Haiti this morning at the Ninoy Aquino International Airport. The repatriates were accompanied by Philippine Ambassador to Cuba Macarthur Corsino.

Welcoming them are Executive Director Enrico Fos of the DFA Office of the Undersecretary for Migrant Workers Affairs (DFA-OUMWA), representatives from the Overseas Workers Welfare Administration (OWWA), the DFA-OUMWA staff and the repatriates' families. Doctors from the Philippine National Red Cross were also present.

"We are glad that all of the Filipinos who signified their intentions of coming home are now with us. These Filipinos will be receiving assistance from government agencies, just like any repatriate," DFA Undersecretary for Migrant Workers Affairs Esteban Conejos said.

Those who will not be met with their next of kin in the airport can stay in the OWWA's halfway house, and they will be provided transport assistance to their hometowns. They will also be given livelihood assistance packages from OWWA, according to Undersecretary Conejos.

He added that once the repatriates get home, representatives from the Department of Social Welfare and Development will be providing psychosocial assistance and debriefing to help them get over the trauma they suffered.

"This is a total package," Undersecretary Conejos said.



This last batch of repatriates brings the total number to 63.

The repatriations are a major component in the plan of action approved during the meeting of the the Philippine Task Force for Recovery, Relief, Assistance and Repatriation in Haiti earlier convened by Foreign Affairs Secretary Alberto G. Romulo.

It also included the US\$50,000 humanitarian assistance the Philippines extended to Haiti, as well as the deployment of the Department of Health (DOH)-led medical team to Port-au-Prince.

Efforts to look for Filipinos Mary Grace Fabian and Geraldine Lalican is ongoing. They are still trapped inside the collapsed Carribean Supermarket.

Philippine Honorary Consul to Haiti Fitzgerald Brandt is supervising recovery efforts for them in Port-au-Prince.

Meanwhile, the 21-man, Department of Health (DOH)-led medical team to Haiti continues to look after the medical needs of the Haitian people and the Filipino community there.

They are at the Hospitalier Eliazar Germain in Rue Pan America in Port-au-Prince, a two storey bulding with a 45-bed capacity.

A sub-group of the medical team is providing general care, minor surgeries/debridement/dressing at the Stade Sylvio Cator, a football stadium used an evacuation center for a thousand families near the Hospitalier.

The psychosocial group of the medical team also visited and provided services to Filipino communities affected by the earthquake. Most Filipinos are settled in tents in designated areas for fear of earthquake aftershocks.

The medical team reported that a second medical team is not badly needed, and are consolidating an evidence-based assessment to be submitted to the DOH. END (photos by Benjamin Remo, DFA-PISU)