

For information
on 26 August 2010

**Special Meeting of
Legislative Council Panel on Security**

Follow-up to the 23 August 2010 Philippine Tour Group Incident

On 23 August, a Hong Kong tour group was taken hostage in Manila, Philippines, which resulted in serious casualties. The HKSAR Government (the Government) was deeply grieved by the death of tour group members and offers its condolences to the bereaved families and tour group members injured in the incident.

2. Of the 21 affected tour group members (including a tour escort from Hong Kong), two returned to Hong Kong on 24 August under the escort of officers of the Immigration Department (ImmD). In the evening of 25 August, another eight tour group members, the bodies of the eight deceased members, as well as their accompanying relatives returned to Hong Kong from Manila on the Government's chartered flight, accompanied by a support team. Another injured tour group member and her accompanying relative were brought back by an air ambulance later in the evening. At present, one injured tour group member, accompanied by a family member, is receiving treatment in Manila. Members of the support team, including medical staff, clinical psychologist and immigration officer, will render appropriate assistance.

Immediate follow-up actions

3. Upon learning the hostage-taking incident on 23 August, the Government immediately took the following actions:

- The ImmD immediately rang the Office of the Commissioner of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China in the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (OCMFA) and the Chinese Embassy in the Philippines (the Embassy), requesting for incident updates and assistance.

- The Security Bureau (SB) rang the Philippine Consulate-General in Hong Kong stressing that the safety of the hostages was of utmost importance and requesting that the incident be resolved in a peaceful manner so that all tour group members could be released safe and early.
- At a press briefing, the Secretary for Security gave an account of the latest developments, which included (1) an inter-departmental task force was set up in the Government to handle the incident; (2) three immigration officers and one police officer were sent to Manila to provide assistance; (3) the OCMFA and the Embassy were taking follow-up actions and rendering assistance; (4) upon the request of the SB, the Philippine Consulate-General in Hong Kong undertook to ensure the safety of the Hong Kong tourists; and (5) efforts had been made to contact the families of the tour group members in Hong Kong and offer assistance.

The situation took a sharp turn for the worse at 7:00 pm when gunfire broke out at the scene. The Chief Executive convened a high-level meeting immediately and decided on the following:

- (1) Chartered flights be arranged immediately to bring the family members of the affected Hong Kong residents to Manila. They would be accompanied by a support team from Hong Kong led by the Under Secretary for Security, comprising medical staff, social worker, clinical psychologists, police and immigration officers, as well as other relevant officers, to provide assistance in Manila;
- (2) Black Outbound Travel Alert be issued for the Philippines. All Hong Kong tour groups in the country were requested to return as soon as possible, whereas groups due to depart for the Philippines should cancel their journey. The Government would reserve sufficient seats with airlines for Hong Kong residents in the Philippines to return as soon as possible;
- (3) The HKSAR Flag would fly at half-mast the following day, i.e. 24 August, and all principal officials would cancel unnecessary public activities; and

- (4) The Philippine Government was requested to confirm all follow-up arrangements and to give an explanation for the incident as early as possible.

The Government endeavours to make all-out efforts to deal with the aftermath of the incident. Our primary concern is to ensure each tour group member and his/her family are provided with all necessary assistance or services, and to closely follow up on the investigation of the incident by the Philippine Government. A chronology of the actions taken by the Government in relation to the incident up to this point is set out at the Annex.

Assistance to people affected

4. The Social Welfare Department (SWD) has assigned a case manager for each of the affected families, who will conduct a comprehensive assessment of their welfare needs and provide appropriate services, including counselling, psychological and emotional support, family and child care, financial assistance and referral services, etc. The case manager will also co-ordinate support services provided by various departments. In addition, the SWD will provide appropriate counselling service for the bereaved families and other Hong Kong residents who are emotionally disturbed by the incident. The department also encourages people who are similarly disturbed by the incident to call its hotline (2343 2255) for help. As regards the tour group member who is receiving treatment in the Philippines, our medical team will stay there to offer necessary assistance.

5. The Government fully understands that the public are deeply saddened by the tragic incident. The Home Affairs Department has set up 18 condolence points throughout the territory in the evening of 24 August for the public to pay respects to the victims. The HKSAR Government has, in addition to regular channels for dissemination of information to the public, created a dedicated page on a social networking website (URL: [facebook.com/hkmourning.manila](https://www.facebook.com/hkmourning.manila)) for the public to mourn the victims by posting messages of condolence and for updates on the latest developments.

Outbound Travel Alert

6. The Government issued a Black Outbound Travel Alert for the Philippines in the evening of 23 August. According to the alert, members of the public should avoid all travel to the Philippines and those already there should return to Hong Kong as soon as possible.

Investigation into the incident

7. The Government has solemnly requested the Philippine Government to conduct a comprehensive, thorough, impartial and serious investigation into the incident, and provide us with a full report as soon as possible, so that the people of Hong Kong can have a better understanding of the whole incident. In this regard, the Philippine President has personally undertaken to conduct a thorough investigation into the incident, and senior officials had been appointed to follow up on it directly.

8. The Hong Kong Police will closely liaise with the Philippine Police in accordance with established international cooperation protocol to follow up on the incident. It will also render assistance in any death inquest that may be conducted in future, in accordance with the law.

Security Bureau
August 2010

Follow-up to the 23 August 2010 Philippine Tour Group Incident

A chronology of government actions

23 August 2010

- At around 11:00 am, the tourism trade reported to the Immigration Department (ImmD) “1868” hotline that a Hong Kong tour group in Manila, Philippines, comprising 20 members and a tour guide was held hostage by a gunman in a coach.
- The ImmD immediately rang the Office of the Commissioner of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China in the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (OCMFA) and the Chinese Embassy in the Philippines (the Embassy), requesting for incident updates and assistance.
- The OCMFA informed the ImmD at 12:20 pm that Embassy staff were already at the scene to provide assistance.
- The Security Bureau (SB) rang the Philippine Consulate-General in Hong Kong stressing that the safety of the hostages was of utmost importance and requesting that the incident be resolved in a peaceful manner so that all tour group members could be released safe and early. The Consulate-General acknowledged that the above were mutual objectives and undertook to relay our requests to the responsible authorities in Manila.
- At a press briefing around noon, the Secretary for Security (S for S) gave an account of the latest developments, which included (1) an inter-departmental task force was set up in the Government to handle the incident; (2) three immigration officers and one police officer were sent to Manila to provide assistance; (3) the OCMFA and the Embassy were taking follow-up actions and rendering assistance; (4) upon the request of the SB, the Philippine Consulate-General in

Hong Kong undertook to ensure the safety of the Hong Kong tourists; and (5) efforts had been made to contact the families of the tour group members in Hong Kong and offer assistance.

- Three immigration officers departed for Manila at the 2:45 pm flight, a police officer also arrived in Manila the same evening. Upon arrival, the officers immediately joined the Embassy staff at the scene and met the released tour group members at the hotel respectively.
- The situation took a sharp turn for the worse after 7 pm when gunfire broke out at the scene. It was reported that the hostages were killed. The Chief Secretary for Administration (CS) and the S for S immediately summoned the Philippine Consulate-General in Hong Kong to express tremendous disappointment and regret over the Philippine Government's departure from their earlier undertaking in handling the incident.
- At the same time, the Chief Executive (CE) convened a high-level meeting to map out a large-scale relief operation. At a press briefing at 11 pm, the CE, accompanied by the CS and the S for S, announced the following decisions/actions by the HKSAR Government (the Government):
 - (1) Chartered flights be arranged immediately to bring the family members of the affected Hong Kong residents to Manila. They would be accompanied by a support team from Hong Kong led by the Under Secretary for Security, comprising medical staff, social worker, clinical psychologists, police and immigration officers, as well as other relevant officers, to provide assistance in Manila;
 - (2) Black Outbound Travel Alert be issued for the Philippines. All Hong Kong tour groups in the country were requested to return as soon as possible, whereas groups due to depart for the Philippines should cancel their journey. The Government would reserve sufficient seats with airlines for Hong Kong residents in the Philippines to return as soon as possible;

- (3) The HKSAR Flag would fly at half-mast the following day, i.e. 24 August, and all principal officials would cancel unnecessary public activities; and
- (4) The Philippine Government was requested to confirm all follow-up arrangements and to give an explanation for the incident as early as possible.

24 August 2010

- The chartered flight departed for Manila at 1:30 am and arrived at 4:00 am.
- The support team took immediate actions, including: visiting the injured at hotels and hospitals, comforting their families, offering professional medical advice upon learning the conditions of the injured and confirming the names of the deceased¹, etc. Through the Chinese Ambassador to the Philippines, the Under Secretary for Security expressed our strong request to the Philippine Government on the early repatriation of the bodies of the deceased to Hong Kong via the chartered flight, as well as the provision of the best possible medical care to the injured.

At noon, the CS summoned the Philippine Consulate-General in Hong Kong again and requested for full assistance in dealing with the aftermath of the incident, including prompt assistance in the repatriation of the bodies of the deceased and provision of appropriate medical care to the injured Hong Kong residents. He also asked for a comprehensive and thorough investigation. The Consulate-General undertook to convey our requests to the top authorities of the Philippines.

¹ There are a total of 21 members in the tour group (including the tour escort), of whom eight died, seven were injured and six released.

The inter-departmental task force met and decided on the following:

- (1) Since the Philippine Government had yet been able to issue death certificates and other relevant approval documents for transporting the bodies of the deceased, the chartered flight would standby in Manila until the bodies, other tour group members and their families could return to Hong Kong;
 - (2) Two members of the tour group and their families confirming their readiness to travel would return to Hong Kong on a scheduled flight on the same day in the company of immigration officers;
 - (3) The Social Welfare Department would assign a case manager to each of the affected families to provide welfare and other assistances, and help coordinate support services provided by various government departments; and
 - (4) The Home Affairs Bureau would set up condolence points in 18 districts throughout the territory; a government website would also be set up for the public to send condolences and pay respects to the victims.
- In the afternoon, the Under Secretary for Security and the Chinese Ambassador to the Philippines met with the President and Vice-President of the Philippines to discuss the incident in which Hong Kong tourists were held hostage and gunned down. The Philippine authorities were requested to provide a comprehensive and thorough investigation report on the incident, appropriate medical care for the injured, assistance to expedite the repatriation of the bodies of the deceased to Hong Kong, as well as full assistance to the work of our support team in Manila.
 - In the evening, the CE convened the high-level meeting again and, in the light of further developments, sought to bring the bodies of the deceased, all other tour group members and their families back to Hong Kong as soon as possible, and to handle all follow-up and support work in Hong Kong properly.

- Taking account of the progress of the Philippine Government in processing the death certificates and the relevant approval documents for transporting the bodies, the Government actively prepared for the return of most of the tour group members, their families as well as the bodies of the deceased to Hong Kong via a chartered flight in the afternoon of 25 August.
- Two tour group members returned to Hong Kong on a scheduled flight in the evening, accompanied by immigration officers. They were met by their family members and social workers upon arrival at the airport and escorted home.

25 August 2010

- Upon the strong request of the support team and with great assistance from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Philippine Government issued the death certificates and all necessary approval documents for the repatriation of the bodies in the morning.
- The Government chartered flight departed Manila at 6 pm and arrived Hong Kong at around 7 pm, carrying a total of eight bodies and all tour group members who were fit for travel. Their relatives and support team members were also onboard the flight.
- The CS together with the directors of the relevant bureaux, the representatives of the Central Government Offices in the HKSAR and the President of the Legislative Council received the tour group at the airport. Condolences were offered to the tour group members and a brief ceremony was held to receive the eight deceased members.
- Two injured tour group members (including one brought back to Hong Kong on a separate air ambulance later in the evening) were immediately transferred to the Prince of Wales Hospital for treatment under the arrangement of the SB and the Hospital Authority.
- The bodies of the eight deceased members were transferred to the Kwai Chung Public Mortuary in the company of their families.

- Case managers of the Social Welfare Department were in the company of the tour group members and their families throughout to understand their needs and provide necessary assistance.

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- Taking into account professional advice, the SB and the Food and Health Bureau were actively following up on the last tour group member who sustained serious injury, including his medical care or arrangements to bring him back to Hong Kong.