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U.S. Department of Homeland Security  
U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services  
Administrative Appeals Office (AAO)  
20 Massachusetts Ave., N.W., MS 2090  
Washington, DC 20529-2090  
**U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services**



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FILE: [Redacted]

Office: CALIFORNIA SERVICE CENTER

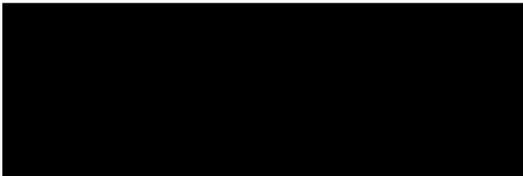
Date:

JAN 21 2011

IN RE: Applicant: [Redacted]

APPLICATION: Application for Waiver of of the Foreign Residence Requirement under Section 212(e) of the Immigration and Nationality Act; 8 U.S.C. § 1182(e)

ON BEHALF OF APPLICANT:



INSTRUCTIONS:

Enclosed please find the decision of the Administrative Appeals Office in your case. All of the documents related to this matter have been returned to the office that originally decided your case. Please be advised that any further inquiry that you might have concerning your case must be made to that office.

Thank you,

Perry Rhew  
Chief, Administrative Appeals Office

**DISCUSSION:** The waiver application was denied by the Director, California Service Center, and is now before the Administrative Appeals Office (AAO) on appeal. The matter will be remanded to the Director to request a section 212(e) waiver recommendation from the Director, U.S. Department of State (DOS), Waiver Review Division (WRD).

The applicant, a native and citizen of the Philippines, obtained a J-1 Visa to participate in a training program in the United States. Based on said J-1 Visa and status, she filed for a waiver of the two-year foreign residence requirement under section 212(e) of the Immigration and Nationality Act (the Act), 8 U.S.C. § 1182(e), noting that she was subject to the two-year foreign residence requirement based on government financing. The applicant sought a waiver of her two-year foreign residence requirement based on the claim that her U.S. citizen spouse would suffer exceptional hardship if he moved to Bahrain temporarily with the applicant and in the alternative, if he remained in the United States while the applicant fulfilled the two-year foreign residence requirement in Bahrain.

The director concurred with the applicant that she was subject to the two-year foreign residence requirement under section 212(e) of the Act based on government financing. The director further noted that as the applicant had obtained her J-1 Visa in Bahrain, her last foreign residence, the applicant would be required to fulfill the terms and conditions of her J-1 in Bahrain, not the Philippines. Finally, the director determined that the applicant failed to establish that a qualifying relative would experience exceptional hardship if the applicant fulfilled her two-year foreign residence requirement in Bahrain. *Director's Decision*, dated May 28, 2010. The application was denied accordingly.

On September 21, 2010, the AAO issued a Request for Evidence, asking for documentation establishing that the applicant was a legal permanent resident of Bahrain at the time of J-1 visa issuance. *Request for Evidence from the AAO*, dated September 21, 2010. In response, counsel submitted a letter to AAO confirming that the applicant was not a legal permanent resident of Bahrain at the time of J-1 visa issuance and consequently, concurring with the AAO that the applicant is subject to the two-year foreign residence requirement in the Philippines, her country of birth and citizenship. *Response to Request for Evidence from Jesse P. Marchan, Esq.*, dated December 9, 2010.

Section 212(e) of the Act states in pertinent part:

No person admitted under section 101(a)(15)(J) or acquiring such status after admission

(i) whose participation in the program for which he came to the United States was financed in whole or in part, directly or indirectly, by an agency of the Government of the United States or by the government of the country of his nationality or his last residence,

(ii) who at the time of admission or acquisition of status under section 101(a)(15)(J) was a national or resident of a country which the Director of the United States Information Agency, pursuant to regulations prescribed by him,

had designated as clearly requiring the services of persons engaged in the field of specialized knowledge or skill in which the alien was engaged, or

(iii) who came to the United States or acquired such status in order to receive graduate medical education or training, shall be eligible to apply for an immigrant visa, or for permanent residence, or for a nonimmigrant visa under section 101(a)(15)(H) or section 101(a)(15)(L) until it is established that such person has resided and been physically present in the country of his nationality or his last residence for an aggregate of a least two years following departure from the United States: Provided, That upon the favorable recommendation of the Director, pursuant to the request of an interested United States Government agency (or, in the case of an alien described in clause (iii), pursuant to the request of a State Department of Public Health, or its equivalent), or of the Commissioner of Immigration and Naturalization [now, Citizenship and Immigration Services (CIS)] after he has determined that departure from the United States would impose exceptional hardship upon the alien's spouse or child (if such spouse or child is a citizen of the United States or a lawfully resident alien), or that the alien cannot return to the country of his nationality or last residence because he would be subject to persecution on account of race, religion, or political opinion, the Attorney General [now the Secretary, Homeland Security (Secretary)] may waive the requirement of such two-year foreign residence abroad in the case of any alien whose admission to the United States is found by the Attorney General (Secretary) to be in the public interest except that in the case of a waiver requested by a State Department of Public Health, or its equivalent, or in the case of a waiver requested by an interested United States government agency on behalf of an alien described in clause (iii), the waiver shall be subject to the requirements of section 214(l): And provided further, That, except in the case of an alien described in clause (iii), the Attorney General (Secretary) may, upon the favorable recommendation of the Director, waive such two-year foreign residence requirement in any case in which the foreign country of the alien's nationality or last residence has furnished the Director a statement in writing that it has no objection to such waiver in the case of such alien.

In *Matter of Mansour*, 11 I&N Dec. 306 (BIA 1965), the Board of Immigration Appeals stated that, "Therefore, it must first be determined whether or not such hardship would occur as the consequence of her accompanying him abroad, which would be the normal course of action to avoid separation. The mere election by the spouse to remain in the United States, absent such determination, is not a governing factor since any inconvenience or hardship which might thereby occur would be self-imposed. Further, even though it is established that the requisite hardship would occur abroad, it must also be shown that the spouse would suffer as the result of having to remain in the United States. Temporary separation, even though abnormal, is a problem many families face in life and, in and of itself, does not represent exceptional hardship as contemplated by section 212(e), supra."

In *Keh Tong Chen v. Attorney General of the United States*, 546 F. Supp. 1060, 1064 (D.D.C. 1982), the U.S. District Court, District of Columbia stated that:

Courts deciding [section] 212(e) cases have consistently emphasized the Congressional determination that it is detrimental to the purposes of the program and to the national interests of the countries concerned to apply a lenient policy in the adjudication of waivers including cases where marriage occurring in the United States, or the birth of a child or children, is used to support the contention that the exchange alien's departure from his country would cause personal hardship. Courts have effectuated Congressional intent by declining to find exceptional hardship unless the degree of hardship expected was greater than the anxiety, loneliness, and altered financial circumstances ordinarily anticipated from a two-year sojourn abroad." (Quotations and citations omitted).

The first step required to obtain a waiver is to establish that the applicant's U.S. citizen spouse would experience exceptional hardship if he resided in the Philippines for two years with the applicant. To begin, counsel for the applicant explains that the applicant's spouse was born in the United States and has no ties to the Philippines. Consequently, were he to relocate to the Philippines for a two-year period, the applicant's spouse would suffer emotional hardship as he would have to leave his country, his long-term gainful employment, his sister, his friends and his community. Counsel further asserts that the applicant's spouse would suffer hardship due to unfamiliarity with the country, culture, customs and language. In addition, counsel explains that the applicant's spouse would not be able to find gainful employment in the Philippines due to the language barrier and his highly specialized job. Finally, counsel contends that the applicant's spouse may be in danger in the Philippines due to the risks of being kidnapped for ransom. *Response to Request for Evidence*, dated April 13, 2010.

In support of the hardships referenced, evidence of the applicant's spouse's gainful employment in the United States as a security officer has been submitted. Furthermore, the AAO notes the following from the U.S. Department of State, in pertinent part:

U.S. citizens contemplating travel to the Philippines should carefully consider the risks to their safety and security while there, including those risks due to terrorism.

Bombings have also occurred in both government and public facilities in Metro Manila which resulted in a number of deaths and injuries to bystanders.

Kidnap-for-ransom gangs operate in the Philippines and sometimes target foreigners as well as Filipino-Americans. The [REDACTED] a terrorist organization, operates in many rural areas of the Philippines, including in the northern island of Luzon. While it has not targeted foreigners in several years, the NPA could threaten U.S. citizens engaged in business or property management activities and often demands "revolutionary taxes."

U.S. citizens in the Philippines are advised to monitor local news broadcasts and consider the level of preventive security when visiting

public places, especially when choosing hotels, restaurants, beaches, entertainment venues, and recreation sites.

Adequate medical care is available in major cities in the Philippines, but even the best hospitals may not meet the standards of medical care, sanitation, and facilities provided by hospitals and doctors in the United States. Medical care is limited in rural and more remote areas.

Serious medical problems requiring hospitalization and/or medical evacuation to the United States can cost several or even tens of thousands of dollars. Most hospitals will require a down payment of estimated fees in cash at the time of admission. In some cases, public and private hospitals have withheld lifesaving medicines and treatments for non-payment of bills. Hospitals also frequently refuse to discharge patients or release important medical documents until the bill has been paid in full.

*Country Specific Information-Philippines, U.S. Department of State, dated May 11, 2010*

Finally, with respect to the financial situation in the Philippines, as noted by the U.S. Department of State, in pertinent part:

Annual GDP growth averaged 4.3% under the Arroyo administration, but it will take a higher, sustained economic growth path--at least 7%-8% per year by most estimates--to make progress in poverty alleviation given the Philippines' annual population growth rate of 2.04%, one of the highest in Asia. The portion of the population living below the national poverty line increased from 30% to 33% between 2003 and 2006, equivalent to an additional 3.8 million poor Filipinos. The food, fuel, and global financial shocks and severe typhoon-related damages of 2008-2009 are expected to have pushed more Filipinos into poverty. Drought brought by the El Nino weather phenomenon reduced agricultural and hydroelectric production in late 2009 and early 2010.

*Background Note-Philippines, U.S. Department of State, dated October 29, 2010.*

Based on the applicant's spouse's family, employment and community ties to the United States and the problematic country conditions in the Philippines, including a substandard economy, high poverty and unemployment, terrorist activity, and crime, the AAO concludes that the applicant's U.S. citizen spouse would experience exceptional hardship were he to accompany the applicant to the Philippines for a two-year period.

The second step required to obtain a waiver is to establish that the applicant's U.S. citizen spouse would suffer exceptional hardship if he remained in the United States during the two-year period that the applicant resides in the Philippines. To begin, counsel explains that the applicant is a critical contributor to the finances of the household and were she to relocate abroad, her husband would suffer financial hardship. *Brief in Support of Appeal, dated July 14, 2010.* In addition, counsel

explains that the applicant's spouse was abused and abandoned as a child, and a separation from his wife would cause him emotional hardship. *Supra* at 5.

In support, documentation has been provided outlining the emotional hardship the applicant's spouse would experience were his spouse to relocate abroad for a two-year period, based on having endured abuse, abandonment and neglect as a young child. *Psychological Evaluation from Jill Foley Torres, Psy.D.*, dated September 15, 2009. In addition, documentation has been provided establishing the critical financial contributions made by the applicant to the household, and further confirming that without her income, the applicant's spouse may suffer financial hardship. Finally, documentation establishing the substandard economy in the Philippines has been provided, to establish that the applicant may be unable to assist her spouse financially in the United States while living abroad. The AAO concludes that based on the evidence submitted, the applicant's spouse would suffer exceptional hardship were the applicant to return to the Philippines for a two-year period while he remained in the United States.

The AAO finds that the applicant has established that her U.S. citizen spouse would experience exceptional hardship were he to relocate to the Philippines and in the alternative, were he to remain in the United States without the applicant, for the requisite two-year term. As such, upon review of the totality of circumstances in the present case, the AAO finds the evidence in the record establishes the hardship the applicant's spouse would suffer if the applicant temporarily departed the U.S. for two years would go significantly beyond that normally suffered upon the temporary separation of families.

The burden of proving eligibility for a waiver under section 212(e) of the Act rests with the applicant. *See* section 291 of the Act, 8 U.S.C. § 1361. The AAO finds that in the present case, the applicant has met her burden. The appeal will therefore be sustained. The AAO notes, however, that a waiver under section 212(e) of the Act may not be approved without the favorable recommendation of the DOS. Accordingly, this matter will be remanded to the director so that she may request a DOS recommendation under 22 C.F.R. § 514. If the DOS recommends that the application be approved, the secretary may waive the two-year foreign residence requirement if admission of the applicant to the United States is found to be in the public interest. However, if the DOS recommends that the application not be approved, the application will be re-denied with no appeal.

**ORDER:** The matter will be remanded to the Director to request a section 212(e) waiver recommendation from the Director, U.S. Department of State, Waiver Review Division.