

## FSM Information Services

### Press Release

#### **Declaration of Public Health Emergency Extended to May 31<sup>st</sup>, 2021; May 13<sup>th</sup> Planned for Repatriation of Stranded Citizens**

PALIKIR, Pohnpei—Per Congressional Resolution (C.R.) 21-252, the Declaration of Public Health Emergency originally implemented by His Excellency David W. Panuelo, President of the Federated States of Micronesia (FSM), on January 31<sup>st</sup>, 2020, has been extended to May 31<sup>st</sup>, 2021. Citizens interested in reading C.R. 21-252 may find it here: [https://gov.fm/files/CR\\_21-252 -  
Effective Date for COVID-19 Emergency Declaration on May 31 2021-compressed.pdf](https://gov.fm/files/CR_21-252_-_Effective_Date_for_COVID-19_Emergency_Declaration_on_May_31_2021-compressed.pdf)

For the great bulk of citizens, residents, and stakeholders, including those residing in the FSM and those stranded abroad, C.R. 21-252 offers no change from the status quo of the past several months and is thematically similar to the previously enacted C.R. 21-245, C.R. 21-228, C.R. 21-185, and C.R. 21-175. Economic provisions, such as cargo shipping and at-sea transshipment of fish, remain in place and unaltered. Travel into the FSM remains restricted, with limited exceptions; outbound travel from the FSM remains open, though such activity is discouraged unless it is medically necessary.

While it remains the intent of the FSM National Government to achieve a minimum 70% vaccination rate amongst its eligible population (i.e. adults aged 18 years and up) prior to the renewal of most repatriation activities from COVID-19 affected jurisdictions, there has been recent but significant movement in the planning for repatriation efforts from the Republic of Palau, the Republic of the Marshall Islands, and the stranded medical patients in the U.S. Territory of Guam. Per C.R. 21-252, stranded medical patients are given the first priority for return into the Nation from COVID-19 affected jurisdictions.

On March 30<sup>th</sup>, 2021, the FSM National Government sent a diplomatic note to the Government of the United States of America requesting a humanitarian assistance flight from Guam to the FSM. Since the sending of that diplomatic note, and an equally supportive and receptive response from the U.S. Government, President Panuelo—upon consultation with the FSM COVID-19 Task Force—has designated May 13<sup>th</sup>, 2021, as the repatriation date for stranded medical patients, attendants, students, and top-level diplomats.

Additionally, the U.S. Government has offered to provide the FSM with medical capacity-building personnel. Noting that the two primary arguments the Pohnpei State Legislature suggested for postponing repatriation efforts in December, 2020, were premised on the lack of sufficient medical

personnel, and the lack of ventilator training—of which neither issue has been addressed, as there remains a personnel shortage and ventilator training has not begun—President Panuelo has been recommended by, and has since advised, the FSM COVID-19 Task Force that he supports the arrival of doctors from the U.S. Centers for Disease Control & Prevention, the U.S. Department of Health & Human Services, and/or the U.S. Department of Defense. Such medical personnel will be asked to provide assistance during the Nation’s initial repatriation efforts, and to build medical capacity within the FSM.

The FSM COVID-19 Task Force has recommended, and President Panuelo has concurred, that repatriating citizens will be required to be fully vaccinated against COVID-19, with limited exceptions.

It is expected that, on Tuesday, April 6<sup>th</sup>, 2021, the FSM COVID-19 Task Force, in a joint meeting with the Pohnpei State COVID-19 Task Force, and the Embassy of the United States of America, will further clarify the details of the May 13<sup>th</sup> repatriation activity.

C.R. 21-252 still requires the implementation of a 14-day pre-quarantine and two negative COVID-19 tests, without modifications or exceptions to these requirements. In the event the FSM COVID-19 Task Force, either through consultation with the State COVID-19 Task Force/s and/or medical specialists, determines that such a 14-day period is unnecessary, either in whole or in part, the Executive Branch would be mandated to submit the justification to the 21<sup>st</sup> FSM Congress’ Congressional Committee on Health & Social Affairs, and receive a formal written communication signed by a majority of its members, if the 21<sup>st</sup> FSM Congress is not in session.

All repatriating persons will undergo the same COVID-19 testing and security protection regimes. All preventative and protective measures necessary to effectively complete this repatriation effort successfully are being implemented and put into effect both in Guam and in the FSM. Access and visitation to designated pre-quarantine and quarantine facilities is restricted.

As of April 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2021, 26% (15,552 persons) of the Nation’s eligible population has received their first dose of the COVID-19 vaccine, and 17% (9,866) have received their second and final dose of the vaccine.

In addition to having received 62,600 doses of the Moderna COVID-19 vaccine thus far, the FSM has also received 1,800 doses of the single-shot Johnson & Johnson vaccine. The Moderna COVID-19 vaccine has a shelf-life of six months, compared to the Johnson & Johnson vaccine’s shelf-life of three months.

“We are among the most fortunate countries in the world,” President Panuelo said in a statement, “As we’ve kept our Nation COVID-19 free. We began our COVID-19 vaccination campaign on December 31<sup>st</sup>, 2020, and now it’s our citizens’ individual responsibility to take the vaccine, and help protect yourself and your family, to help keep the overall safety and health of our Nation intact from the devastation of the COVID-19 Pandemic. We mandate children to take certain vaccines before going to school for their safety and our Nation’s safety, and so it doesn’t make sense that our Nation’s adults are hesitant to do the same.”

“We are committed to May 13<sup>th</sup> as our first repatriation activity from a COVID-19 affected jurisdiction,” President Panuelo continued. “I emphasize again that it is a very serious responsibility upon our Nation’s citizens to ensure that you get vaccinated at the nearest possible opportunity. I am mandating that every National Government frontline worker—every doctor, nurse, customs, immigration, quarantine, and police officers, and transportation workers, who may come into contact with repatriating persons—be fully vaccinated, and encourage our State Governments to do the same, so as to help ensure that we have as airtight a repatriation regime as possible. This can make or break our Nation’s overall health and safety if we don’t take the personal responsibility to get vaccinated.”

As of April 5<sup>th</sup>, 2021, the FSM remains COVID-19 free.

Queries regarding the Executive Branch’s execution of C.R. 21-252 can be relayed to the Manager for Environmental Health & Preparedness, Mr. Moses Pretrick, at [mpretrick@fsmhealth.fm](mailto:mpretrick@fsmhealth.fm) or at +691-320-8300. Queries may also be relayed to the Public Information Officer/Press Secretary, Mr. Richard Clark, at [richard.clark@gov.fm](mailto:richard.clark@gov.fm) or +691-320-2548. Citizens may also send a direct message to the Office of the President’s Division of Public Information on Facebook at <https://www.facebook.com/piofsm/>