



**Homeland  
Security**

March 13, 2020

**NATIONAL INTEREST EXEMPTION  
FROM MARCH 11, 2020 PRESIDENTIAL PROCLAMATION SUSPENDING ENTRY  
OF IMMIGRANTS AND NONIMMIGRANTS OF CERTAIN ADDITIONAL PERSONS  
WHO POSE A RISK OF TRANSMITTING 2019 NOVEL CORONAVIRUS**

On March 11, 2020, in order to address the threat to the nation posed by transmission of a novel coronavirus that causes the disease COVID-19, the President issued a Proclamation suspending the entry of aliens who were physically present within the Schengen Area, consisting of 26 European states, within the 14-day period preceding their entry or attempted entry into the United States. The March 11, 2020 Proclamation followed directly from two earlier Presidential Proclamations suspending the entry of aliens from specified regions for purposes of protecting the United States against the spread of the novel coronavirus that causes COVID-19.

Proclamation 9984, issued on January 31, 2020, suspends the entry of aliens who were physically present within the People's Republic of China (excluding the Special Administrative Regions of Hong Kong and Macau) during the 14-day period preceding their entry or attempted entry into the United States. Proclamation 9992, issued on February 29, 2020, suspends the entry of aliens who were physically present within the Islamic Republic of Iran during the 14-day period preceding their entry or attempted entry into the United States.

As with Proclamations 9984 and 9992, the March 11, 2020 Proclamation contains several exceptions, including an exception for "any alien whose entry would be in the national interest, as determined by the Secretary of State, the Secretary of Homeland Security, or their designees." At the time the March 11, 2020 Proclamation issued, a significant number of individuals subject to its entry suspension were onboard cruise ships returning to the United States. These individuals previously entered the United States lawfully from the Schengen Area for purposes of embarking on a cruise from the United States, and due to the effective date of the March 11 Proclamation, are now subject to the entry suspension as their cruise ships begin returning to the United States.

I have determined that permitting the entry of these aliens for purposes of effectuating their safe, efficient, and expeditious return home is in the national interest for several reasons. First, doing so will allow all passengers to disembark their cruise ships, thereby avoiding a situation in which the virus spreads rapidly among passengers confined to the close quarters of a ship, thereby endangering any passengers and crew remaining onboard. Second, given the number of individuals returning to the United States from these cruise ships, processing them as inadmissible to the United States will overburden our officers and facilities as they disembark the

passengers from these cruise ships; cause unnecessary delays that will contribute to mass gatherings of individuals awaiting processing; and divert critical Department resources from existing operations. Finally, ensuring that aliens subject to the entry restrictions return home quickly and safely will reduce any potential health risks to the Department's frontline personnel, ensuring that these employees will continue the vital missions required to ensure the security of the nation. In reaching this decision, I have consulted with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) to ensure that permitting these individuals to temporarily enter the United States is consistent with CDC's overall efforts to mitigate and respond to the COVID-19 outbreak.

Therefore, with respect to all aliens currently aboard cruise ships destined for the United States and who would otherwise be subject to the entry suspension of the March 11, 2020 Proclamation, I have determined that their entry would be in the national interest and hereby exempt all such aliens from the Proclamation. This exception will permit affected aliens to enter the United States for the purpose of returning to their home countries and may not be utilized to extend their stay in the United States. Accordingly, Department officials will permit these aliens to enter the United States so that they may arrange for their prompt return to their home countries. Department officials will also work closely with CDC officials to ensure that these aliens are provided appropriate guidance for taking the appropriate health measures until boarding an aircraft home. This exception shall remain in effect through March 18, 2020.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Chad F. Wolf", written over a horizontal line.

Chad F. Wolf  
Acting Secretary