



REPUBLIC OF PALAU  
OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT

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**EXECUTIVE ORDER NO. 499**

*“Enhancing border security and visitor access through an updated list of Excluded Countries and a revised visa and pre-clearance system”*

**WHEREAS**, in 2009, President Johnson Toribiong issued Executive Order No. 274, which directed immigration officers to deny entry at any port of entry to all persons holding passports from certain “Excluded Countries” unless the traveler obtained a visa in advance, thereby establishing Palau’s first formal framework for heightened scrutiny of travelers from specific jurisdictions; and

**WHEREAS**, subsequent assessments by the Ministry of Human Resources, Culture, Tourism, and Development documented workforce shortages and confirmed the need to modernize and rebalance Palau’s labor and immigration systems, while the Bureau of Human Resources determined that many procedural requirements under Executive Order No. 274 remained appropriate but had become outdated and incomplete; and

**WHEREAS**, in recent years the Bureau of Customs and Border Protection (BCBP) has recorded a sharp increase in attempted irregular entry, inconsistencies in submitted documents, and significant overstays by travelers from a broader set of countries, which demonstrate that Palau’s existing, country-specific visa restrictions no longer reflect present-day risks or migration patterns; and

**WHEREAS**, BCBP has further documented that Palau currently lacks a comprehensive, legally formalized list of visa-required or pre-clearance-required nationalities, and in the absence of updated presidential directives, immigration officers have been relying on a 2019 Ministry of Justice guidance letter as the operative authority for screening “flagged” travelers, resulting in inconsistent enforcement and avoidable uncertainty for airlines, sponsors, and travelers; and

**WHEREAS**, BCBP’s analysis identifies several countries with repeated, documented concerns such as visa fraud, long-term overstays, cancelled return tickets, fragile documentation, UN-flagged security risks, and other patterns that require advance screening to protect the Republic’s borders; and

**WHEREAS**, the lack of a unified, modernized, and transparent visa-screening regime has created operational challenges for immigration officers, increased carrier liability for improperly screened travelers, and imposed uncertainties on legitimate visitors, including



tourists, students, and business travelers, hindering Palau's efforts to be an attractive destination and a reliable travel partner; and

**WHEREAS**, the President has determined that a new visa policy must repeal and replace the outdated provisions of Executive Order No. 274, as subsequently modified by Executive Order No. 478 and other related directives addressing specific nationalities and visa processes, which were adopted to respond to discrete labor or operational needs but did not establish a comprehensive, modern, and permanent pre-arrival screening framework, and must expand the list of countries requiring pre-arrival clearance while establishing a fast, predictable, and user-friendly process for travelers from such countries to obtain visas or pre-clearance before departure; and

**WHEREAS**, the President further finds that a modernized system that balances national security, border integrity, economic needs, and Palau's longstanding values of hospitality will best promote the Republic's interests, protect the traveling public, and ensure that Palau remains both secure and welcoming; and

**WHEREAS**, under Article VIII of the Constitution and Title 13 of the Palau National Code, the President is vested with broad authority over immigration policy, including the authority to prescribe conditions of entry and to deny entry when necessary to protect the best interests of the Republic;

**NOW, THEREFORE**, I hereby update the list of countries subject to mandatory pre-arrival clearance and establish a modernized visa and pre-clearance framework as follows:

**Section 1. Excluded Countries.**

BCBP shall refuse to issue any visa of any nature at any port of entry in Palau to any person holding a passport issued by any of the following Excluded Countries. These countries are designated pursuant to the President's finding under 13 PNC § 1005(1) that requiring advance visas for their nationals is in the best interests of the Republic, based on documented risks including overstays, fraudulent documentation, asylum misuse, and other immigration concerns identified by BCBP:

- (1) Bangladesh
- (2) Cambodia
- (3) Cameroon
- (4) Ghana
- (5) Haiti



- (6) Iran
- (7) Myanmar (Union of Myanmar)
- (8) Nigeria
- (9) North Korea
- (10) Saint Kitts and Nevis
- (11) Sri Lanka
- (12) Vanuatu

## **Section 2. Visa and pre-clearance framework.**

### **(a) Pre-arrival screening required.**

All nationals of Excluded Countries listed in Section 1 must obtain either (1) a valid visa issued prior to travel, or (2) an official pre-clearance authorization issued by BCBP before boarding any flight or vessel bound for Palau. Airlines and carriers shall not permit any such traveler to board without written confirmation from BCBP.

### **(b) Submission timeline.**

Applications for pre-clearance must be submitted no fewer than 5 days before travel, in accordance with BCBP's recommended timeline. Emergency submissions may be accepted when justified under Section 4 of this Order.

### **(c) Submission method.**

Applicants shall submit all pre-clearance materials to [immtravelapproval@bcbp.pw](mailto:immtravelapproval@bcbp.pw), or through any successor system established by BCBP, including any forthcoming visa system.

### **(d) Required documentation.**

BCBP shall require the following materials for pre-clearance review:

- (1) completed Pre-Clearance Application Form;
- (2) Entry Form submission;
- (3) passport biographic page;
- (4) confirmed non-refundable return ticket;
- (5) accommodation confirmation;
- (6) proof of sufficient funds;
- (7) invitation letter, if applicable (meeting the criteria in Title 13);
- (8) optional references or supporting documents for verification;
- (9) any additional documentation as required by the Director.



These requirements may be adjusted through administrative guidance issued by BCBP.

(e) Duration of authorized stay.

The period of stay granted to applicants shall be based on the return ticket provided, not to exceed thirty (30) days, unless the applicant has secured a formal visa or permit authorizing a longer stay. No extensions of pre-clearance-based entry shall be granted.

**Section 3. Review, approval, and notification protocols.**

(a) Acknowledgment of receipt.

BCBP shall acknowledge receipt of a pre-clearance application within 24 hours of submission.

(b) Decision timeline.

BCBP shall issue a decision (approval, denial, or request for further documentation) within 3-5 business days of receiving a complete application.

(c) Approval format.

BCBP shall issue a Pre-Clearance Confirmation Letter to approved travelers containing:

- (1) traveler name and passport number;
- (2) approved travel dates;
- (3) airline and flight information; and
- (4) clearance reference number.

BCBP shall provide carriers with a daily Cleared Traveler List for verification prior to boarding.

(d) Denial format.

BCBP shall issue a Pre-Clearance Denial Notice to disapproved applicants, specifying:

- (1) reason for denial;
- (2) whether re-application is permitted; and
- (3) advisory not to travel until clearance is issued.



Airlines shall not board any traveler whose application has been denied.

**Section 4. Emergency and exceptional circumstances review.**

(a) 24-Hour review for compelling cases.

BCBP may accept applications up to 24 hours before travel for exceptional circumstances, including:

- (1) diplomatic missions;
- (2) government-invited guests;
- (3) medical emergencies; or
- (4) other urgent official travel verified by a government agency.

(b) Airline notice requirement.

Airlines must immediately notify BCBP when a national from an Excluded Country attempts to board without clearance.

(c) 2-hour rapid review.

In urgent cases, BCBP shall conduct real-time assessment and issue a decision within 2 hours, if feasible. BCBP may deny boarding where the traveler presents an unverified purpose, incomplete documentation, or any security or compliance risk.

**Section 5. Diplomatic travelers.**

(a) No automatic exemption.

Diplomats from Excluded Countries are not automatically exempt from the pre-clearance requirement.

(b) Required documentation.

Diplomatic travelers must submit:

- (1) valid diplomatic passport;
- (2) official duty orders or travel assignment;
- (3) invitation from the Ministry of State or relevant Palauan agency; and



(4) documentation consistent with the Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations.

(c) Fast-track review.

Upon confirmation of diplomatic status and travel purpose, BCBP may conduct expedited review. Airlines shall not board diplomats from any Excluded Country without BCBP written confirmation.

**Section 6. Standardized forms and automation.**

(a) Standardized pre-clearance application form.

Prior to the effective date of this Order, BCBP shall finalize and publish a standardized Pre-Clearance Application Form consistent with Title 13 and this Order.

(b) Publication.

The updated form shall be made available:

- (1) on the official BCBP website (<https://bcbp.pw>); and
- (2) to all carriers, travel agents, and sponsoring agencies.

(c) Future integration.

BCBP shall coordinate with the Office of the President and relevant agencies to integrate pre-clearance into any forthcoming visa system, ensuring automation, document tracking, and improved processing efficiency.

**Section 7. Communication and implementation.**

(a) Public notice.

BCBP shall promptly publish and disseminate a public advisory summarizing this Order, including:

- (1) updated Excluded Countries list;
- (2) application requirements;
- (3) processing timelines;
- (4) carrier responsibilities; and
- (5) emergency and diplomatic protocols.



(b) Carrier obligations.

All carriers transporting passengers to Palau must comply with this Order and are responsible for ensuring that no traveler from an Excluded Country boards without written confirmation as required pursuant to this Order.

(c) Inter-agency coordination.

BCBP shall coordinate with the Ministry of State, the Bureau of Public Safety, the Attorney General's Office, the National Security Coordinator, and other relevant agencies to ensure full implementation.

**Section 8. Effective date and duration.**

This Order shall take effect on March 30, 2026, and shall continue until it is repealed or until it is superseded in a future Executive Order.

**Section 9. Previous orders.**

Executive Order Nos. 274, 428, and 478, are hereby repealed, as are any other previous executive orders to the extent they conflict with this Order. In addition, any prior presidential directive, administrative order, memorandum, letter, guidance, instruction, or other policy or practice, regardless of title or form, relating to country-specific entry restrictions or pre-clearance treatment is hereby repealed and shall have no further force or effect.

**IN WITNESS WHEREOF**, I have hereunto set my hand and affixed my official seal this 11<sup>th</sup> day of February 2026 in Koror, Republic of Palau.

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Surangel S. Whipps, Jr.  
President of the Republic of Palau