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FPC BRIEFING

**DOUGLASS BENNING, PRINCIPAL DEPUTY ASSISTANT SECRETARY
BUREAU OF CONSULAR AFFAIRS**

DR. CINDY FRIEDMAN, CHIEF OF CDC'S TRAVELERS' HEALTH BRANCH

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- ◆ Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary for Consular Affairs Douglas Benning and Chief of the Traveler's Health Branch for the Centers for Disease Control Dr. Cindy Friedman discuss the October 25 presidential proclamation and how it changes requirements for foreign national travelers starting November 8, as well as the implementation of CDC's orders regarding vaccines, testing, and contact tracing for international travelers.

THE WASHINGTON FOREIGN PRESS CENTER, WASHINGTON, D.C. (Virtual)

MODERATOR: Okay, great. Good morning and thank you for joining this Foreign Press Center virtual briefing on the international vaccine requirement. Today's briefing is on the record and will be recorded. A transcript will be posted later today on the Foreign Press Center website at fpc.state.gov.

My name is Doris Robinson, and I am pleased to introduce our briefers today. Douglass Benning is the Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary for the Bureau of Consular Affairs and Dr. Cindy Friedman is the Chief of the Travelers' Health Branch at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. The briefers will make brief opening remarks and then we will open for your questions. And I will turn it over to PDAS Benning.

MR BENNING: Thank you very much. Good morning, everybody, and thank you so much for joining us today. As mentioned, I'm Douglass Benning, the Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary in the Bureau of Consular Affairs. I'm very happy to be with you today to explain in a bit more detail the upcoming changes for foreign travelers to the United States. I'm extremely glad to welcome my colleague from the CDC, Dr. Friedman, who's here to answer questions about the

science and public health framework behind these changes.

So first, I want to reiterate what others have already said: This new policy is based on public health principles; it's consistent; and it's very stringent. The goal is the protection of everyone's health and safety, whether they live here in the United States or whether they are traveling here to visit us. So as of November the 8th, nonimmigrant foreign national air travelers to the United States will be required to be fully vaccinated and to provide proof of vaccination status prior to boarding an airplane to the United States. I'll let Dr. Friedman speak to the specific vaccines that will be accepted.

This new policy replaces the previous presidential proclamations that limited travel from specific countries. The proclamation issued yesterday applies to all foreign national nonimmigrant air travelers, making it more consistent. We've updated the policy, but our commitment to combating the pandemic (inaudible) and make sure you understand the new requirements before making travel plans.

Because we're prioritizing public health, exceptions to this (inaudible) —

MODERATOR: I think we lost PDAS Benning. I think we will ask him to relog in. And Dr. Friedman, why don't I turn it over to you?

MS FRIEDMAN: Sure. That's fine. I can start. So yesterday, CDC issued three orders to implement the presidential proclamation to operationalize the new international air travel system in accordance with appropriate public health protocols to ensure the safety of international travel. And these orders include operational details and putting in place stringent and consistent international air travel policy that is guided by public health.

So I'll go over the three orders right now, and the first one that I'll talk about is the vaccination requirement for non-U.S. citizens who are not immigrants. So on November 8th, air travelers to the United States who are non-U.S. citizens who are not immigrants will be required to be fully vaccinated and to provide proof of their vaccination status before flying to the United States. As a reminder, there are separate requirements for immigrants regarding vaccination and medical screenings. The airlines will verify vaccination status in the same way they have been doing for a while with proof of pre-departure negative test results, and they will continue to do that.

For the (inaudible) entry to the United States, vaccines accepted will include FDA-authorized and approved vaccines and WHO vaccines that are listed for emergency use, or EIU vaccines. There

approved vaccines and WHO vaccines that are listed for emergency use, or LDC vaccines. There

will be very limited exceptions to the vaccine requirements for non-U.S. citizens who are non-immigrants. CDC has determined the very narrow list of exemptions, which includes children under 18 and individuals on certain visas from countries with less than a 10 percent vaccination rate due to lack of vaccine availability.

So I'll move on to the next order, which is an amendment to our current testing requirement for all international air travelers, regardless of citizenship. So fully (inaudible) passengers regardless of citizenship will require – will be required to show predeparture negative test results taken within three days of travel before boarding, and vaccinated air travelers will be required to show proof of vaccination to qualify for the three-day testing window. Unvaccinated air passengers, including unvaccinated U.S. citizens and lawful permanent residents, will now be required to show proof of a negative test taken within one day of departure to the United States. Children under two will not need to do a test. There will also be accommodations for people who have documented recovery from COVID-19 within the past 90 days.

And finally, the last order is the collection of contact information. So all air passengers to the United States will also be required to provide basic contact information to the airlines before boarding flights to the United States. This will allow airlines to better coordinate with public health agencies to share information when needed to keep the public safe and informed, as well as to strengthen the ability of public health agencies to rapidly identify and contact people in the U.S. who may have been exposed to a communicable disease, including COVID-19.

So in addition to these orders, all travelers really need to plan ahead before traveling and follow airline and destination requirements, including mask wearing, proof of vaccination, testing, or quarantine. U.S. travelers need to be prepared to show proof of a negative test before they travel to the United States and should make arrangements for testing in advance of travel if possible. Vaccinated U.S. travelers will need to carry and provide proof of vaccination to the airlines to qualify for the three-day testing window; otherwise one-day tests will be required.

And so we know that the best way to slow transmission of COVID-19 and the emergence of new variants is to act quickly through vaccination, layered with additional mitigation measures, including timely case detection through testing, contact tracing, and public health follow-up of international travelers.

And I hope Doug is back on. Douglass?

MR BENNING: I think I'm back.

MS FRIEDMAN: Okay. Great. And maybe you can pick it up where you left off. I'll stop there.

MR BENNING: All right. Thank you very much, Dr. Friedman. My apologies to everyone for dropping out. I'm not sure in my opening remarks where I dropped off, so I'm just going to sort of pick up, perhaps repeating things that I've said, and to reiterate a few things that Dr. Friedman also said.

So just basically talking about the new – with the new proclamation includes that as of November 8th nonimmigrant foreign national air travelers to the U.S. will be required to be fully vaccinated and to provide proof of vaccination status prior to boarding an airplane to the U.S. This replaces the previous presidential proclamations that limited travel from specific countries. The proclamation issued yesterday applies to all foreign national nonimmigrant air travelers, making it more consistent.

So we've updated the policy, but our commitment to combating the pandemic remains the same. Our message to potential travelers is: be fully vaccinated before you travel; get a COVID test before arriving here; comply with all public health measures, including masking and social distancing; and make sure you understand the new requirements before making travel plans.

Because we're prioritizing public health, as Dr. Friedman noted, exceptions to this policy will be extremely limited, to include children and certain individuals from countries where vaccines are not yet readily accessible.

There have also been updates to the existing testing requirements for boarding a plane coming to the – to come to the United States. For those who are vaccinated, the testing requirement remains at three days before their flight. And for the rare foreign traveler who is eligible to travel but not yet vaccinated, that person will need to provide proof of a negative COVID-19 test within one day before the flight's departure.

We know that the resumption of international travel for countries affected by the previous presidential proclamations has been highly anticipated, and we want to make sure that those who are making plans to visit us are fully informed about the new requirements. So please make sure everybody visits travel.state.gov and cdc.gov to understand the new requirements. and

make sure you're ready to meet them so that you can have a safe and smooth trip.

We would add that the new proclamation, unlike the previous proclamations, does not restrict the adjudication of visas overseas at our embassies and consulates. Also I want to note that the COVID-19 pandemic resulted in, of course, profound reductions in the department's visa processing capacity. We continue to work very hard to find ways to safely and efficiently process visa applications around the world in a manner that's consistent with science and public health. We're committed to reducing these visa backlogs as quickly and safely as possible.

Thanks very much, and again, apologies for the interruption.

MODERATOR: Thank you. And now we will open for questions to our journalists. Please go to the participant link and raise your hand, and I will call on you in turn. So for our first question we will go to James McCarten, and he is with the Canadian Press. James, go ahead.

QUESTION: Hi there. Can you hear me?

MODERATOR: Yes.

QUESTION: Perfect. I'm curious about the testing requirements that have been added here. When we were briefed on these measures when they were first announced, my recollection is that we were told that there would not be a testing requirement and that a testing requirement hadn't been in place up until that point. So I'm curious to know what has changed, if anything, in order to put that in place.

And if I could very quickly also ask: Can you speak to whether or not people traveling over the land border, in particular Canada-U.S., will also be required to submit test results prior to travel?

MS FRIEDMAN: Hi, I can take the question. Is that okay, Douglass, or did you want to start?

MR BENNING: No, absolutely, absolutely. Go right ahead.

MS FRIEDMAN: So I think the first question was about testing. And so our testing requirement has been in place since January 2021, thereabouts. I don't recall any plans to ever change that. I think what we've done here is to tighten up and make travel safer, allowing more people to enter the country, taking down travel bans from certain countries, and making it more equitable and requiring a layered approach, which includes vaccination, and if those who can't be vaccinated or

are unvaccinated at this point who are eligible to enter would have a shorter window to be tested before entry to the U.S. And we know that testing, pre-departure testing, does reduce transmission risk, and the closer that test is done to the time of departure the more risk reduction that occurs. So I hope that gets at your question, but I'm unaware of any plans to ever change that testing.

And then the second question, can you repeat it? I'm sorry, I lost my train of thought.

QUESTION: Sure. I was asking about land borders.

MS FRIEDMAN: Right. Those land details are coming soon from Customs and Border Protection and the Department of Homeland Security, so be on the lookout for that.

QUESTION: Thank you.

MODERATOR: Thank you. Our next questioner is Dmytro Anopchenko from Inter TV Channel, Ukraine. Dmytro, can you hear me?

QUESTION: Yeah, I hear you. Thank you. So just two short questions, please. Douglass, the first is for you: So not only the travel from the European countries was limited, but a transit of their citizens of the third countries through the European airports was not possible right now, and it's not possible right now. So for example, Ukrainians are not possible to travel through Paris, Amsterdam, or Frankfurt. Could you confirm that starting from November 8th third-country citizens will be able to transit through European airport on their way to the United States?

And Dr. Friedman, the question for you: When the second shot should be done to be eligible to travel? So for example, you told that people should be fully vaccinated, but should they wait 14 or 10 days after this, their second shot, or even on the date of their second shot? If they got the proof, they will be eligible to travel? Thank you.

MR BENNING: Yeah, so I'll take the first part of the question, thank you. The answer is yes, as of November 8th such travelers will be able to transit through third countries on the way to the United States.

MS FRIEDMAN: And the amount of time after the second dose would be 14 days. So it's not the day you get vaccinated. And those details are laid out on our web page at CDC. We have all the

information about what constitutes fully vaccinated, and those time periods are there. Thank you.

MODERATOR: Thank you. And our next question goes to Karl Doemens. He is with RND Berlin. Karl.

QUESTION: Hi, thanks for doing this. As far as I understand, CDC still demands that people who are not vaccinated and enter the country under one of these exemptions take a test here in the U.S. after arrival and self-quarantine for one week. Does this also apply to children, which would basically mean that, let's say, if a family from Germany comes to spend New Year's Eve in New York or – the kids would basically have to stay at the hotel during that time?

MS FRIEDMAN: Right, so I think your question is about limited exceptions that are – enter the country unvaccinated, so if there's a family with children, the parents are vaccinated but the children are unvaccinated. They will still – children under 18 are exempted from the vaccination requirement for foreign national travelers, given both their ineligibility for some children for vaccination, and there's global variability in access to vaccination for older children in some countries. So they're exempted from that. They still would be required to test both in what – both pre-departure, as we've discussed, and post-arrival they would be required to test.

QUESTION: But my question was on the self-quarantine. The – if —

MS FRIEDMAN: They would be – they would go with their parents. They would be connected to their parents. So if their parents are vaccinated, the children wouldn't need to self-quarantine. But they would need to test.

QUESTION: Okay. Thank you.

MODERATOR: Thank you. Our next question goes to Magdalena Sakowska with Polsat TV, Poland.

QUESTION: Hi, can you hear me?

MODERATOR: Yes, thank you.

QUESTION: Hello. Thank you for doing this meeting. I have two questions. One is about children that are older than two years. So they need to have a test, and when the child is unvaccinated and older than two, the test should be taken within one day or within three days? How is this with children? And the other also about children: Dr. Friedman just said that after arrival to U.S., the children need to repeat the test. When exactly?

MS FRIEDMAN: Okay, so the first question is for children, if they're traveling with fully vaccinated parent or parents, then they have the three days to get that pre-departure test. If they are traveling alone or they are traveling with an unvaccinated parent, then they have the one day to get the test pre-departure. For the post-arrival test, that test – they require a test, that they will get that post-arrival test three to five days after arrival.

QUESTION: Okay, thank you. And one more question. What will be the procedure if someone traveling U.S. throughout the travel will get positive test? Then when – and would like to travel to U.S. in the near future. So when the person can re-take the test? What documents such person needs to presented, and when?

MS FRIEDMAN: So I think you're saying – so if someone's positive they would be denied boarding, but I think what you – and we would recommend they isolate while they're infected. But I think what you're asking about is someone who was recently infected and has recovered, and that they might still have a positive test result. We have a process currently in our testing order, and it will continue, that if you have – can document proof of recent recovery from an infection within the 90 days, and – that you have a positive test, then you can – you would be able to board. So it's documented – documentation of recovery, like a doctor's letter, and then within the past 90 days that you were infected. Does that —

QUESTION: No, I was asking what – no, no, I was asking when someone is vaccinated and has no symptoms, and three days ago to travel is going to have a test, and the test is positive. So I understand that the person needs to quarantine for how long – I mean, 10, 14 days – then retake the test to get a document for the doctor. And then is the person eligible to travel to U.S.?

MS FRIEDMAN: Right. So that person, if they are vaccinated or unvaccinated and they get a positive test, they need to be treated as if they were infected. They need to then, when they want to travel – when they're recovered, they would show that they have proof – a doctor's letter

or some proof that they have recovered, and they can travel. But they may or may not still have a positive test at that point, but as long as they've – have proof of recovery, they would be able to board.

QUESTION: Okay, thank you so much.

MODERATOR: Thank you. Thank you. Our next question goes to Jahanzaib Ali with ARY News, Pakistan.

QUESTION: Thank you so much, Doris. Thank you so much for doing that. I have two questions. There are many reports of fake vaccination cards all over the world. We heard some reports in America. So is there any system in place to check these fake vaccination cards? Because if the people are coming here unvaccinated, there's another problem.

And secondly, I have seen that only U.S.-approved and WHO-approved vaccines are eligible. So there are many people in the world who didn't have – or have not got the WHO-approved vaccine. So what are your recommendations for them? Should they get a booster shot of J&J, Moderna, or Pfizer before coming to the U.S.? Thank you.

MS FRIEDMAN: Okay, it takes me a minute to get off mute.

So for each of the requirements, air passengers – to get at your first question, air passengers will have to sign an attestation certifying the validity of their vaccination, testing, and that the contact information, documentation is accurate. And falsifying any information may result in penalties or fines.

And then the second question about vaccines, right now we – CDC has approved the WHO EUL vaccines, and for the purposes of travel to the United States we would also include combinations of vaccines. So this includes Pfizer, Moderna, J&J, AstraZeneca, and they all have been WHO EUL listed. And as those lists get updated, our list will change as well.

MODERATOR: Thank you. And it looks like we have time for two more questions. I will go to Kasumi Abe with Cross FM Japan.

QUESTION: Yes, thank you. I might miss some information, but I'd like to do a double check. So sometimes I have a question from my readers about some people have a allergy, so it's a medical

reason and they can't take – they couldn't get vaccinated. So in this case, can they just take a test, a negative test, and then come to the U.S.? Or they can't, they are not allowed to come to the U.S.?

MS FRIEDMAN: Okay, I'm off mute. Sorry.

Yeah, so the presidential proclamation and CDC order include a very limited set of exceptions from the vaccination requirement for foreign nationals, and this includes those people with rare medical contraindications. And so airlines will need to confirm that the passenger has written documentation from a licensed physician of – stating a medical contraindication to receiving a COVID-19 vaccine.

QUESTION: Is it part of waiver, so they need to maybe take a few hours to be verified?

MS FRIEDMAN: So they will need to have a letter to show to the airlines. The airlines will be the ones checking whether they are vaccinated or not. So if they come to the airport with no proof of vaccination but they have a medical contraindication, they need to show the airlines documentation from a physician that they could not be vaccinated because of a medical contraindication. And CDC gives them instructions and will – to the airlines about how to check this.

QUESTION: I see. Can —

MODERATOR: Thank you.

QUESTION: I have – sorry, I have one more question.

MODERATOR: Sure, go ahead.

QUESTION: Yeah. And you said that maybe a low rate of vaccinate in some countries, like under 10 percent availability of vaccination, is exception. How many countries are of this category?

MS FRIEDMAN: Right now there are 50 countries on the list of limited vaccine availability, but we will do an assessment regularly. Every three months, CDC will be updating the list.

QUESTION: I see. Thank you so much.

MODERATOR: Thank you. And our last question goes to Alex Raufoglu with Turan News Agency, Azerbaijan.

QUESTION: Thank you so much for doing this, and thank you, Doris. I appreciate the opportunity. I have a very technical question, if I may. It's about the dose of J&J holders. The CDC, as you know, recently changed requirement and reduced the time for them to get booster, which is I think two months after they got their first. Will that mean, given the new update in your policy, that those of us who have – who have J&J shot between, like, April and, let's say, September won't be considered fully vaccinated as of November? What is the policy on this? Thank you so much.

MS FRIEDMAN: Right. So currently, our policy does not include booster vaccinations. So the primary series for J&J currently is one dose, and so – and that you would be – 14 days after that one dose you would be considered fully immunized. Not to say that our guidance couldn't change in the future, but right now we are not including boosters in the definition of fully vaccinated for purposes of travel.

QUESTION: Terrific. Thank you so much.

MODERATOR: Thank you. We are out of time, and I would like to ask our speakers if they have any final comments before we close.

MR BENNING: Not from me. Thank you so much. Really appreciate the opportunity.

MODERATOR: Great. Dr. Friedman?

MS FRIEDMAN: No, I None from me as well. I thank you for asking such good, detailed questions, and I hope you can get this information out to your readers. So thank you.

MODERATOR: Absolutely. And I would like to thank our journalists for participating today, and I would like to thank Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary Douglass Benning and Dr. Cindy Friedman with the Center for Disease Control and Prevention for taking the time to brief us today. And with that, this briefing is concluded. Thank you all.

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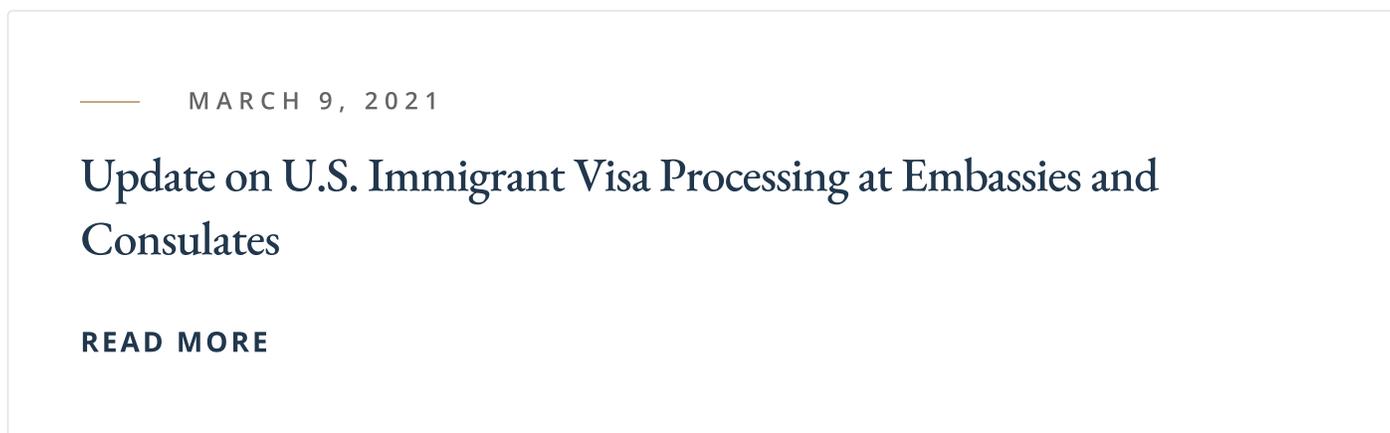
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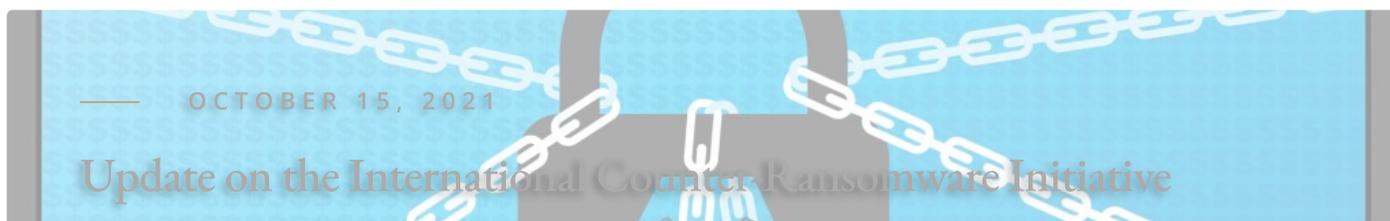
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