

33 Guam-bound workers denied visas, but 76 H-2B workers now on island

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(Photo: Frank San Nicolas/PDN)

At least 33 foreign skilled workers who were supposed to work on military projects on Guam had their H-2B worker visa applications denied at the U.S. Embassy in Manila. One worker said some of the visas were denied because the workers allegedly overstayed their visas the last time they worked on Guam, a couple of years ago.

Despite the setback, Guam now has 76 H-2B workers from the Philippines, including Tuesday's arrival of a second batch of foreign workers, to help with hangar projects on Andersen Air Force Base worth more than \$200 million.

More: [First batch of new H-2B workers arrives on Guam after nearly 3 years \(/story/news/2018/06/13/first-batch-new-h-2-b-workers-arrives-guam-after-nearly-3-years/697020002/\)](/story/news/2018/06/13/first-batch-new-h-2-b-workers-arrives-guam-after-nearly-3-years/697020002/)

More: [Court orders H-2B class suit notice to be sent out by June 15 \(/story/news/2018/05/31/court-orders-h-2-b-class-suit-notice-sent-out-june-15/658426002/\)](/story/news/2018/05/31/court-orders-h-2-b-class-suit-notice-sent-out-june-15/658426002/)

Guam's new H-2B workers, as well as those whose visa applications were denied, had been hired by PHC Corp. is a subcontractor for a joint venture of Core Tech International, Amec Foster Wheeler and SK Engineering and Construction Co. Ltd., which was awarded the contract for the hangar projects on base.

U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services approved all of PHC Corp.'s petitions for 333 H-2B workers, but those workers still have to apply for and obtain a visa at the embassy in Manila.

"We expect another 32 to 40 workers in early July," PHC Corp. General Manager Jong Won said.

Petitions denied for allegedly overstaying

One of the Guam-bound workers in the Philippines waiting for an appointment date at the embassy said nine of his colleagues were denied their H-2B petitions on June 21 alone, including six welders.

The reason given for the denial, according to the worker, is "overstaying on Guam" in 2016 during their previous employment on island.

More: [Feds approve more foreign labor for Andersen hangar project \(/story/news/2018/04/20/feds-approve-more-foreign-labor-andersen-hangar-project/535083002/\)](/story/news/2018/04/20/feds-approve-more-foreign-labor-andersen-hangar-project/535083002/)

More: [Gov. Eddie Calvo: Guam has no H-2B workers \(/story/news/2018/05/15/gov-eddie-calvo-guam-has-no-h-2-b-workers/609989002/\)](/story/news/2018/05/15/gov-eddie-calvo-guam-has-no-h-2-b-workers/609989002/)

Greg Massey, administrator for the Guam Department of Labor's alien labor processing and certification division, said visa denials of individual foreign nationals are common, for several reasons.

"If individuals are being denied for a previous overstay, then that is proof that the system works and that there are consequences for overstaying. GDOL is aware that some workers may have overstayed, but the numbers are relatively small," Massey said on Thursday.

The Labor Department also works closely with the fraud units from USCIS and the U.S. Department of State-Manila Embassy to assist them in their federal mandates with regards to the H-2B program, Massey said.

USCIS approved 654 H-2B petitions

Massey said USCIS has so far approved petitions for 654 H-2B workers for Guam.

Of this number, 76 workers have already arrived.

A total of 2,020 H-2B positions have so far been requested for fiscal 2018, Massey said.

Guam used to have as many as 1,500 H-2B workers but in 2015, the federal government started denying requests for new H-2B visas.

The denials eventually led to Guam having no H-2B workers as of early May 2018.

Guam officials lobbied for the approval of H-2B petitions for the island, and the 2018 Defense budget allows Guam to employ as many as 4,000 a year for projects directly connected to or associated with the Marine realignment on Guam.

However, Guam is still fighting for the approval of H-2B visas for civilian projects.

More: [GEC to decide whether Speaker Benjamin Cruz is eligible to run for public auditor \(/story/news/2018/06/28/gec-decide-whether-speaker-benjamin-cruz-eligible-run-public-auditor/740972002/\)](#)

More: [Judge orders to extend solid waste receivership until end of the year \(/story/news/2018/06/28/judge-pushes-back-solid-waste-receivership-until-end-year/740702002/\)](#)

Reporter Haidee Eugenio covers Guam's Catholic church issues, education, government, business and more. Follow her on Twitter @haidee_eugenio (https://twitter.com/haidee_eugenio). Follow Pacific Daily News on Facebook/GuamPDN (<http://www.facebook.com/guampdn/>) and Instagram @guampd (<http://instagram.com/GuamPDN>).

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