



PRESS RELEASE

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County, State and Federal Authorities Conduct Emergency Repatriation Exercise

Representatives from local, state and federal agencies participated in a full-scale repatriation drill today in a scenario where more than 600 American citizens abroad needed evacuation assistance to immediately return to the United States due to unrest and terrorism in a foreign country.

The mock exercise, held at the Ontario International Airport and the Ontario Convention Center, tested the ability of local, state, federal and non-governmental organizations to screen, process, and offer temporary assistance to U.S. citizens and their dependents in the event Americans living or visiting abroad ever need to return in an emergency due to deteriorating conditions of that country such as illness, war, the threat of war, invasion or other crisis.

“Ontario International Airport could someday be the entry point for hundreds of Americans if they need to come back home in an emergency,” said Michael Antonucci, Manager of the Office of Emergency Services in San Bernardino County. “We want to make sure we are prepared with our state and federal partners if this very serious scenario ever becomes a reality.”

The U.S. Repatriation Program was established in 1935 to provide temporary assistance to U.S. citizens and their dependents who have been identified by the U.S. Department of State as having returned or been brought from a foreign country to the U.S. because of a crisis. Some repatriating Americans may not have ever lived in the United States or visited for decades.

Under federal law, repatriates upon their arrival at a port of entry into the United States are eligible to receive emergency repatriation assistance through the U.S. Repatriation Program. Cash aid, travel expenses, medical and mental health emergency care, temporary lodging, reunification assistance, assistance acquiring clothing and personal items, and other services are offered to repatriates who need assistance.

During the exercise, approximately 200 volunteer actors played the roles of repatriating Americans and recirculated through the process several times throughout the day to simulate the repatriation of 600 people. The actors were welcomed to the United States, registered for potential federal assistance, screened for potential health, medical and emotional needs, and processed through immigration and customs. The repatriating actors were taken to the Ontario Convention Center where county, state and federal agencies were given the opportunity to test their plans and procedures, the quality and timeliness of services, the adequacy of resources and the ability to adapt and provide for the needs of repatriates.

Following today’s exercise, an After-Action Report will be produced that summarizes the performance of the agencies by identifying strengths and areas where improvement may be needed.

Photos of the exercise are located on SmugMug at <https://sbcofd.smugmug.com/Training/Training-Exercises/2018/2018-California-Emergency-Repatriation-Exercise/>.