Immediate Coronavirus-Related Travel Ban: U.S. Halts All Travel From Europe

Thursday, March 12, 2020

President Trump has announced the unprecedented step of suspending travel from Europe for 30 days beginning at 11:59 p.m. EST on Friday, March 13, for non-U.S. citizens. Although his initial announcement referenced a suspension of trade in goods as well, a subsequent tweet and guidance from the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) appeared to backtrack and limit the measures to immigration.

The U.K. and Ireland are specifically exempted from this 30-day travel suspension, and mandatory quarantines for any exempt individuals remain a very distinct possibility.

Shortly after the president’s speech, the DHS clarified that the 30-day restriction does not apply to U.S. legal permanent residents (green card holders) and U.S. citizens. The DHS also indicated that the travel suspension would not apply to most immediate family members of U.S. citizens and permanent residents. The restriction also allows for the admission of other individuals where it is in the national interest to do so. Nevertheless, mandatory quarantines for these exempt individuals remain a very distinct possibility.

At this point, it appears that the travel restrictions will primarily apply to visitors from the Schengen Area in Europe, which is a region of 26 countries that have suspended internal borders pursuant to the EU implementing agreements and includes countries such as France, Germany, Italy and Spain that send thousands of business travelers and tourists to the U.S. every year. In addition, the DHS clarified that the suspension would apply to any foreign traveler who has been in one of those countries in the 14 days preceding the intended arrival to the United States.

It is critical to take appropriate action as soon as possible. Citizens of the affected countries who are currently in the U.S. must seek solutions on a case-by-case basis concerning their current visa status, and foreign nationals on the Visa Waiver Program are not legally able to extend their status.

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