

Taiwan to review ties with the Philippines

Written by Taipei Times

Monday, 07 February 2011 06:50 -

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs said it would “seriously review the current exchanges and ties between Taiwan and the Philippines” after Manila deported 14 Taiwanese to China instead of to Taiwan.

Lawmakers are demanding that the nation’s representative to Manila be recalled to express Taiwan’s dissatisfaction with the Philippines’ handling of the deportation issue, but Minister of Foreign Affairs Timothy Yang (楊毅) said only that “all possible options are under consideration,” the Central News Agency said.

Ignoring the requests by the Economic and Cultural Office in Manila, the Philippine government sent the 14 Taiwanese and 10 Chinese detainees to China on a charter flight on Wednesday.

The individuals were arrested late last year on charges of cross-border fraud against Chinese nationals.

Yang was quoted as saying on Saturday that the Philippine government’s handling of the case was inappropriate, flawed and a violation of the jurisdiction principle of nationality.

“They did not heed our opinions at all,” Yang said, adding that the Philippine executive branch refused to release the Taiwanese suspects even after Taiwanese officials stationed in Manila and attorneys retained there had secured writs of habeas corpus issued by the Court of Appeals of the Philippines. “The Philippine government did not respect the legitimate rights of the suspects nor did it allow us the proper channels to fully state our position.”

After Taiwan lodged a strong protest over the issue on Wednesday, the Philippine government called a meeting the following day, which brought together Philippine President Benigno Aquino III, the justice minister and staff members of the Manila Economic and Cultural Office in Taipei to discuss response strategies.

Reports from Manila said the government there is scheduled to issue a statement today on the

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dispute.

Although Taiwan's government agencies have been closed since Wednesday for the Lunar New Year holiday, diplomatic officials have continued to work on the case over the past few days, Yang said.

China reportedly pressured the Philippines to deport all the suspects to Beijing under a bilateral extradition treaty because the case involved huge illegal profits and all of the victims were Chinese citizens.

Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA) deputy spokesman Steve Shia (謝偉思) said Philippine officials have maintained contact with Taiwan's representative in Manila.

Last week the ministry summoned Philippine Representative to Taiwan Antonio Basilio and his deputy, Carlo Aquino, to state Taiwan's position on the issue.

Follow-up options, including the possible recall of Taiwan's representative in Manila, will be decided after an overall review of the latest developments, Shia said.

The last time Taiwan recalled a diplomatic mission chief was in 2008 in a row with Japan over an investigative report on the sinking of a Taiwanese ship that had collided with a Japanese Coast Guard boat in the waters off the disputed Diaoyutai Islands (釣魚台).

ADDITIONAL REPORTING BY AFP

Source: [Taipei Times - 2011/02/07](#)