

BVI Turns Away Ship Over Coronavirus Concerns

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Costa Favolosa Cruise Ship

THE BRITISH VIRGIN ISLANDS — The Government of the British Virgin Islands on Wednesday blocked a ship from docking at its port over concerns that persons on the vessel may have been in regions with the deadly coronavirus.

According to a statement made available to the press, the BVI government said it had been reported that a number of persons had flown in from Italy and boarded the ship — destined for the BVI — in Guadeloupe.

“After consultation with the Chief Medical Officer (CMO) and other senior health officials, a decision was made that cruise ship M/V Costa Favolosa will not be allowed to call on the Virgin Islands today,” said the government. “This period is within the 14-day incubation period of

COVID-19. It was also reported that 5 passengers had fallen ill with 3 testing positive for the Influenza A Virus, and are isolated on board the ship. It was determined that the ship was unable to conduct the test for the presence or absence of COVID-19." The news was first reported by BVI Platinum.

Italy's coronavirus outbreak has continued to spread, straining efforts to contain it mostly to two rural areas near Milan and Venice, according to multiple U.S. media reports. At least 322 people had been confirmed to have contracted the pathogen in Italy as of Tuesday afternoon, Italian authorities said. As of Tuesday 11 people had died in Italy, all of them elderly.

With this knowledge, the BVI government decided not to take any chances.

"Following Cabinet being apprised by the CMO and health officials, the Ministry of Health and Social Development is in continued discussions, and is working with all cruise lines calling on the BVI to ensure enhanced health and safety screening procedures and practices. The cruise industry is of critical importance to the Territory and all efforts would be jointly made on a case-by-case basis to ensure the health and safety of residents and guests," the BVI government said.

Earlier this week, [a cruise line with over 6,000](#) people on board was denied access to the port of call in Ocho Rios, St. Ann, Jamaica on the island's north coast after one of the crew members had been placed in isolation.

A brief government statement said that the MSC Meraviglia cruise ship, which arrived here at approximately 8.30 am (local time) with 4,500 passengers and a crew of more than 1,600, had been inspected by the Port Health officials where "it was discovered that a crew member was placed in isolation on board.

"The crew member had a cough, fever and associated muscle pains with a travel history to a country of interest relating to the novel coronavirus (COVID-19)," the statement said.

The public relations and advocate officer at the North East Regional Health Authority, Angenice Whyte, told the Gleaner newspaper that "we saw that there was somebody there who is in quarantine because that person came from the Philippines and the 14 days have not elapsed.

"They have that person in quarantine but that was not told to us before the ship docked, so as part of our public health standard and regulation handed down by the Ministry of Health on how we deal with communicable diseases, we did not allow persons to leave the ship," Whyte added.

So far more than 2,700 people have died from the virus. The CDC has been working to roll its coronavirus test kits out to other public-health labs, but the process was stalled when some labs got inconclusive results, according to WSJ. About 445 people have been tested.