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Carnival's Princess Cruises Halts Global Operations for 60 Days in Response to Rapid Spread of Coronavirus

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Carnival Corp's upscale cruise line, Princess Cruises Ltd.

Carnival Corp's upscale cruise line, Princess Cruises Ltd., has cancelled cruise operations for the next two months as concerns over COVID-19 spreads across the globe.

The territory is expected to take an economic hit from the 60-day "voluntary and temporary" pause of Princess cruises.

At least nine stops scheduled for the WICO dock in Havensight, St. Thomas, were scheduled for the remainder of March and in April. Three Princess vessels - the Caribbean Princess (3,100

passengers, 1,200 crew), Sky Princess (3,600 passengers, 1,300 crew) and the Regal Princess (3,500 passengers, 1,300 crew) - were all slated to visit the territory.

The cancellation of the Princess Cruises calls on the V.I. will have an economic impact, but exactly how significant the hit will be is unclear.

A second cruise line that calls on the Virgin Islands — Viking Ocean Cruises — has suspended all ocean and river cruises until May 1st.

At least one Viking vessel, the Viking Sea, stopped at the WICO docks in March.

Government House Communications Director Richard Motta said Gov. Albert Bryan is en route back from Miami, where he met with cruise industry representatives about COVID-19 planning.

"Right now, the main focus is the health of residents and visitors," Mr. Motta said.

"The second concern is the economic impact. We know (cancellations) will have an impact, and we are in the process of forecasting what this specifically means for the Virgin Islands. ... What it means for the support industry - the taxi drivers, merchants, vendors, Vendors Plaza."

Mr. Motta said the administration is also tracking possible Congressional action to prop up industries that are vulnerable during a downturn in tourism.

Princess operates two ships that were stricken by COVID-19. Neither ship travels to the Virgin Islands. The Grand Princess was denied entry to San Francisco Bay last week en route back from Hawaii as authorities learned some passengers and crew had developed flu-like symptoms, and that patrons from an earlier cruise aboard the same ship had tested positive for coronavirus.

The Diamond Princess at one point had the highest number of COVID-19 infections outside of China. The boat was quarantined off the coast of Japan in February. Seven hundred people on board were infected, and six people died.

"By taking this bold action of voluntarily pausing the operations of our ships, it is our intention to reassure our loyal guests, team members and global stakeholders of our commitment to the health, safety and well-being of all who sail with us, as well as those who do business with us, and the countries and communities we visit around the world," said Jan Swartz, president of Princess Cruises, in a statement posted to the company's website.

According to Princess Cruises, "... Those currently onboard a cruise that will end in the next five days will continue to sail as expected through the end of the itinerary so that onward travel arrangements are not disrupted. Current voyages that are underway and extend beyond March 17 will be ended at the most convenient location for guests, factoring in operational requirements. Princess will do everything possible to return each guest home with the greatest amount of care possible."