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Territory to Reopen Lodging Reservations for Off-Island Guests June 1, Governor Says

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Governor Albert Bryan has told the Consortium his administration will allow reservations for hotels and other lodging services in the territory to reopen on June 1, a move that will mark a milestone since the governor, through an emergency order, [closed occupancy services to visitors six weeks](#) ago in an effort to blunt the spread of the novel coronavirus.

This means the territory will officially start accepting visitors from outside on June 1, raising the potential for the deadly pathogen — which has infected 66 persons and killed four in the USVI as of Tuesday — to see a surge in cases. Even so, Mr. Bryan said he was not beyond "revoking everything if we have to, just to keep people safe."

Currently, hotels can accommodate business and inter-island travel. "If you're a resident you can check-in at a hotel so you can have a staycation if you want to do that," said the governor.

On the U.S. mainland, where phased re-opening of states have also commenced, the Trump administration is projecting that cases will rise steadily in the coming weeks until the number arrives at 200,000 a day by the end of May, up from the current 25,000. The death toll is projected to rise to 3,000 a day by June 1, a 70 percent increase from the current 1,750.

The Institute for Health Metrics and Evaluation at the University of Washington, which is often cited by the Trump administration, [is estimating](#) that there will be nearly 135,000 deaths on the mainland through the beginning of August, a figure that is more than double what the institute had forecast on April 17, when it estimated 60,308 deaths by Aug. 4 (the U.S. has already topped 70,000 deaths).

The new projection reflects the "rising mobility in most U.S. states as well as the easing of social distancing measures expected in 31 states by May 11, indicating that growing contacts among people will promote transmission of the coronavirus," the institute said.

Back in the territory, Mr. Bryan said people are safer now than they were a week ago, pointing to the mandatory wearing of masks — which residents, for the most part, have been complying with — and the closed geography of the territory, which does not include interstate travel, transit systems and large buses.

"We don't have a mass transit system, we don't have a large bus system, we don't have interstate [travel], so our factorization is a lot different. For the most part we still have a choked off tourism aspect because we don't have that many people coming into the territory because they can't go to a hotel," Mr. Bryan said.

The governor also differentiated protocols that are in place as part of his "Safer at Home" plan from those of other U.S. jurisdictions. "Most states don't have a mandatory face mask inside commercial establishments and most states are allowing you to go into restaurants and eat. We still don't have that; our bars are still closed," the governor said.

Mr. Bryan was optimistic about the current outlook. "I mean, so far so good. I think people are safer now that they were last week, and people are complying with the mask rule — no mask no service," he said.

New York, which has confirmed nearly 20,000 coronavirus-related deaths, is taking an approach that sees hotels and restaurants being among the last businesses to reopen following the May 15 expiration of the current order. According to [the Wall Street Journal](#), in the first phase in the state, construction and manufacturing businesses in certain regions will be permitted to resume operations, along with select retail stores. In the second phase, professional services and real-estate businesses would be allowed to reopen, the governor said. In the third phase, restaurants and hotels will be permitted to reopen.