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Bryan Mum as USVI Cases Surge to 106 in 2 Days, With Infections at Seniors Home, Outbreak at Prison

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In the past two days, the U.S. Virgin Islands has experienced its [highest single-day number](#) of Covid-19 infections, [an outbreak](#) at the Alexander A. Farrelly Criminal Complex in St. Thomas, and [10 new resident and 6 new staff cases](#) at the Queen Louise Home for the Aged — the most vulnerable of populations to be affected by the deadly virus in the USVI.

Yet, following his press briefing on Monday where Mr. Bryan vowed to strictly enforce Covid-19 protocols for restaurants, warned boaters against rafting, and curtailed funeral attendance to no more than 10 family members, Mr. Bryan has been mum on the concerning surge in Covid-19 cases in the territory.

The V.I. Dept. of Health on Wednesday evening reported 43 new cases of the virus territory-wide, 9 on St. Croix, 2 on St. John and 32 on St. Thomas. St. Thomas is now leading the USVI with 165 active cases, followed by 27 on St. Croix and 5 on St. John.

A day before, D.O.H. reported 63 new cases territory-wide, equating to a two-day total of 106.

Community spread represented 14 of the 32 new cases in St. Thomas, followed by 8 close contact cases, 2 through travel while 8 cases remained under investigation. On St. Croix, 2 of the 9 cases were transmitted through community spread, 1 through close contact and the other cases were under investigation as of Wednesday evening.

During his Monday press briefing, Mr. Bryan acknowledged that he considered limiting restaurants to takeout only and implementing an 8:00 p.m. curfew. "But we're not going to do that. We're going to fine the culprits that are having these mass gathering events — people congregating outside, drinking and having a good time; not adhering to social distancing — we're going to shut it down 30 days no questions asked," Mr. Bryan said.

At the press briefing, he said only the Federal Aviation Administration has the authority to shut down America's airports, a reminder made to address Virgin Islanders who have called for Mr. Bryan to take tougher action at the territory's airports to blunt the spread of the virulent disease.

In March, however, Mr. Bryan had [ordered that all occupancy facilities stop accepting reservations](#), a move that essentially halted travel to the territory outside from residents returning home, as visitors had no where to stay. The governor reopened reservations as part of his administration's "Open Doors" phase, which is currently the active mode of operation.

Mr. Bryan has pointed to data showing that travel-related transmission, over 70 thus far, was among the lowest causes of Covid-19 infections in the USVI. Instead, the governor has pointed to local transmission, including close contact and community spread, as the main means through which the virus has escalated. However, while travelers represent the least amount of cases, some of those travelers — many of whom are visitors who come for a short time and leave — have spread the virus to locals, which has exacerbated local transmission of the contagion. Last month, when St. Croix was experiencing a surge in cases at Limetree Bay, the outbreak was triggered by workers brought into the territory who tested positive for the virus. Following the outbreak, Mr. Bryan announced a [temporary ban](#) on new incoming contractors for Limetree Bay.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention [last week](#) placed a Level 3 Travel Notice warning on the USVI. The advisory warns against non-essential travel to the territory, pointing to a high risk of contracting Covid-19 and limited medical resources to serve those who do fall ill.

On Tuesday, New York [added the USVI to the list of states and territories](#) where travelers coming from those locations are required to quarantine for 14 days.

Mr. Bryan has spoken about a strategy shift that would keep the USVI open while managing the number of Covid-19 cases through successful hospitalization and release of patients. "At the end of the day Albert Bryan makes the decision on whether we're going to open or close. Not anybody else. one man. And I think we've done a great job of being able to keep it open and keep people healthy. Yes we have a lot of cases, but the problem isn't getting the cases, the problem is dying. So we have the facilities and continue to grow our facilities in terms of treating people and making sure that they come out alive," Mr. Bryan said.

Of the new strategy, the governor said, "That shift comes as a result of remember, when we started doing this, we thought we would be done by summer and then we would be okay. The realization that it's not going to end anytime soon — even if we get a vaccine, we still have another year at least — and coronavirus is going to be around for years. So the most important thing now is being able to manage your hospitals and being able to make sure that people stay alive."

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