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# No, Virgin Islanders Will Not Be Used as Test Subjects for Coronavirus Vaccines

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**The only Covid-19 vaccines that will be distributed by the V.I. Dept. of Health are those approved by the US Food and Drug Administration. By. JOE RAEDLE/GETTY IMAGES**

A rumor making the rounds on social media claiming that Virgin Islanders will be among first test subjects for a Covid-19 vaccine is flat out false. The [video in question](#) has been shared nearly 400 times on Facebook and has received over 11,000 views.

The rumor derived from a 60 Minutes video that took a closer look at President Trump's "Operation Warp Speed" — an initiative aimed at developing and distributing a coronavirus vaccine in what will be the fastest delivery time in vaccine development history: roughly one year, compared to the 10-year window in the traditional process.

The controversy apparently gained traction based on the following quote from Marion Whicker [in the CBS 60 Minutes](#) program: "The Virgin Islands has already reported in that they don't have ultra-cold freezers. That's okay. And that they don't have an ability to dry ice. But what we do know is that we can very quickly move dry ice from Puerto Rico."

Ms. Whicker, who came from making tanks for the U.S. Army to join the Operation Warp Speed effort, was providing answers to 60 Minutes about America's readiness to receive a vaccine that would have already been tested in multiple stages and approved by the Food and Drug Administration for mass distribution. She explained the process of what would be an approved Covid-19 vaccine, in this instance from drugmaker Pfizer, which needs to be kept frozen before use, and the level of readiness of U.S. states and territories to receive the vaccine.

Ms. Whicker was not referring to a Covid-19 drug that would be undergoing tests and being shipped out to test subjects. Such an initiative would not be handled by Operation Warp Speed, it would be done by the drugmakers.

The Pfizer vaccine needs to be kept at minus 83 degrees Celsius, which is 117 degrees below zero Fahrenheit — extremely cold.

Relative to Covid-19 vaccine development in the U.S., the process must go through several test phases, which include human test subjects. Drug companies such as Pfizer and Moderna, for example, have enrolled nearly 44,000 and 30,000 test subjects respectively in what are now the companies' late-stage testing programs. These programs see tens of thousands of test subjects being given the late-stage, in-development vaccine to measure effectiveness. These test subjects are in the U.S. and other countries, among them the U.K., Brazil and South Africa.

To emphasize, there is no plan afoot to use Virgin Islanders in the territory as test subjects for a Covid-19 vaccine. What Ms. Whicker in the 60 Minutes interview was referring to is U.S. states' and territories' ability to safely receive, store and administer a FDA-approved Covid-19 vaccine.