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First Caribbean Cruise to Set Sail in Covid-19 Era Turns Up With 6 Positive Coronavirus Cases; Voyage Aborted

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Sea Dream 1 By. TRAVEL WEEKLY

BARBADOS, CMC — The first cruise ship to set sail in the Caribbean in the era of Covid-19 turned up with 6 positive coronavirus cases, with Barbados providing help to the ship to isolate the patients and quell further spread.

Meanwhile, the Barbados government Friday sought to reassure citizens that their health status was not being compromised after authorities allowed the cruise ship, Sea Dreams 1, to dock on the island.

"I can't speak for the cruise ship and I don't want to be able to do that, but I can safely say that we are assisting like we have been doing all the time and that assistance is being provided through the Dos Santos Lab at Harrison Point," said Barbados Health and Wellness Minister Jeffrey Bostic on a radio program.

He told radio listeners that "there is absolutely no compromise from our perspective in terms of public health compromising Barbados so there is nothing at all for Barbadians to be worried about."

Passengers on the Sea Dream 1 were informed of the first case aboard on Wednesday – five days into the week-long voyage – with Captain Torbjorn Lund announcing four new cases a day later.

The ship's 53 passengers — 37 Americans and 16 others from the UK, Austria, Denmark, Norway, Sweden and Germany — as well as non-essential crew were quarantining in their cabins after the cruise was halted and the ship returned to dock in Barbados.

Bostic said that as of Thursday, "We would have tested I believe 34 people when the ship reported that they had four persons on board. During our testing we have picked up six positive cases totally."

The Health and Wellness minister said that no one was allowed to leave the vessel, and that "the cases that were on board the vessel were isolated." He said Health and Wellness employees boarded the vessel to perform tests and contact tracing.

Only one person, who Bostic said needed medical attention, was allowed to disembark. This person was brought to Barbados's Harrison Point for treatment."

He again stressed that Barbadians were not at risk. "There was absolutely no risk to Barbadians. Remember we created a system several months ago to repatriate thousands of passengers and crew members on these vessels and it was done in a very comprehensive manner, and in terms of health protocols there were no issues and there are no issues at all."

Bostic said the vessel has since departed Barbados.

International media reports said that the infections on the cruise ship came as a blow to the cruise industry which has been decimated by the pandemic after travel dropped off in March amid fears of the virus spreading.

Cruise ships in particular gained a reputation as potential floating petri dishes after a number of huge outbreaks aboard liners in the early stages of the pandemic in February.

The Sea Dream 1's voyage was intended to restore confidence in the industry and coax travelers back onto liners with increased safety protocols. Many of the passengers are journalists and travel bloggers invited to document the journey.

The cruise was the first of 22 sailings in the Caribbean and the ship was scheduled to make stops in St. Vincent and the Grenadines, and Grenada.