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January 27, 2021

TO: The President
FROM: Secretary
SUBJECT: Joint Report on Chief Mailo Repatriation



I am pleased to submit the attached joint report prepared by the medical team that conducted the quarantine and isolation of the crew of Chief Mailo upon its arrival in Pohnpei, FSM. The report is straight-forward, but for your easy reference I'm highlighting the main findings below:

1. As a joint report, this has been signed by the lead medical and public health officials from Pohnpei State Department of Health Services and the FSM National Government leading the repatriation effort.
2. In executing the work, the medical team adhered to our, as well as Pohnpei's, protocols to ensure that the COVID-9 virus does not reach our shore and that the public is safe.
3. Upon executing the protocols, the team administered the standard test for COVID-19 and consulting with medical experts from the US CDC and WHO.
4. Based on the results of the tests, the clinical presentation of the crew, including the one crew member that was tested positive by GeneXpert PCR, the history of the crew and the ship, the team concluded that the positive case is a historical and non-infectious case and the crew of Chief Mailo does not pose any threat to the public for COVID-19 and should be cleared from isolation and quarantine.
5. Your Department of Health and Social Affairs will use this technical report to collaborate with WHO to remove FSM from the list of COVID-19 affected countries/areas.
6. Pohnpei State is now ready to administer the first dose of vaccine to the crew of Chief Mailo.

I'm standing by if further information is needed.

Respectfully,


Dr. Livingston Taulung

Enclosure:

Chief Mailo Repatriation: A Joint Report of Activities Performed by the Medical and Public Health Teams from FSM National and Pohnpei State Governments

Prepared by

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Background

The Chief Mailo (CM) is a government-owned cargo and passenger vessel that has Chuuk as its home port. The CM traveled to the Philippines in April 2019 for repairs and maintenance. After the repair, the ship was stranded due to the travel restrictions imposed by the National and State governments to prevent the introduction of COVID-19 into FSM. A request for repatriation of CM was assigned to the Maritime Working Group to review and provide recommendations for her safe return to FSM. The vessel was required to follow the FSM Maritime Repatriation protocol, which requires 2 weeks pre quarantine, with a regular health check of the crew, followed by a negative molecular (PCR) test for COVID.

Sequence of Events

July 2020:

However, in late July 2020, one of the crew members became ill and tested positive for COVID-19. Testing of the remainder of the crew was then carried out. Further, two crew members who were asymptomatic were also tested positive for SARS-CoV-2, the COVID-19 virus. All three crew members who tested positive were immediately placed into isolation for 21 days on a different ship in coordination with the Philippines government. The remainder of the crew remained in quarantine on the Chief Mailo.

August 2020:

On August 17, 2020, the end of the isolation and quarantine period, the crew members were re-tested by PCR. All crew members were negative for the COVID-19 virus.

September 2020:

On September 16, 2020, the shipyard where CM had been undergoing repair, facilitated a PCR test for the boy who drifted from Polowat, Chuuk, and rescued at General Santos in the Philippines. The boy's test result was negative by PCR. On September 19 CM departed the shipyard in Navotas and arrived at the anchorage in Gensan City in General Santos on September 22, 2020, where the rescued boy was placed on the ship.

October 2020:

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In October 2020, all crew members were tested for antibodies to the COVID-19 virus: all results were negative except for one crew member who had a positive antibody test (IgG positive and IgM negative). This result was not available on the report that was initially shared. His result, however, only showed a negative PCR test which indicated that the COVID-19 virus was not present in this individual.

December 2020:

In early December 2020, after the wharf was vacated in Gensan City, Chief Mailo moved from the designated anchorage to the wharf so that it could be hooked up to the freshwater pit and the shore power connection box. The crew and the young boy remained confined to the ship and no non-official visitors were allowed on board. A security detail was assigned to provide security. Daily body temperature was taken, recorded, and sent to FSM.

Four days before departure on December 20, 2020, all crew members and the young boy were again tested by PCR and no COVID-19 virus was detected. CM departed Gensan on December 24, 2020, after receiving permission to travel from authority in the FSM.

Arriving in the FSM:

The vessel was required to spend a 14 day 'pre-quarantine' period at sea, before entering the designated anchorage area in FSM. On January 7, 2021, the vessel was permitted to enter the anchorage area in Pohnpei. On the same day, a team from Pohnpei Public Health boarded the vessel in proper PPE to collect swabs for COVID testing. From this batch of 12 tests, one crew member was tested positive for SARS COV-2 on the Gene Xpert machine. The PCR test indicated that the viral load was very low, as evidenced by high CT value. This person was immediately placed in isolation aboard the vessel. The rest were advised about COVID symptoms, wear facial masks, and to maintain social distancing. The captain obtained daily temperatures on everyone onboard (including the rescued boy) and shared with the Pohnpei and National port and health authorities.

Quarantine and Isolation Protocol

The CDC recommended isolation protocol is to isolate any positive cases away from all others for at least 10 days. All contacts should be quarantined, preferably in separate rooms for at least 14 days from the time of the last contact with the positive individual. Daily health checks are required for all persons in quarantine and isolation and testing performed before release from isolation or quarantine, or if any person in isolation or quarantine develops symptoms.

The FSM and Pohnpei protocol were based on a conservative approach to the CDC and WHO recommendations. Based on the most recent information and testing results, the recommendation was to conduct all isolation and quarantine on CM. Quarantine may extend from 14 to 21 days based on daily health checks and weekly testing results.

While it may not be possible to quarantine each person on CM in individual rooms/cabins; it is important to note that if any person was tested positive in quarantine, then all contacts would be

required to restart quarantine for a further 14 days from the date of the last contact with the person tested positive.

January 2020:

On January 18, 2021 (11 days from the initial detection of the positive case), a team from Pohnpei Public Health boarded the vessel to collect swabs and serum for COVID testing. From this batch of 12 tests, only the crew member with the positive result tested positive again for SAR COV-2 on the Gene Xpert and COVID ID Now, all other crew and the passenger were negative. The PCR test on the positive case had a CT value is 41 indicating a very low viral load. His rapid antibody test is positive for IgG. This person was again advised to continue isolation on CM. The others with negative results were advised to continue wearing mask and maintaining social distancing.

On January 22, 2021 (15 days from the initial detection of the positive case), a team from Pohnpei Public Health again boarded the vessel to collect swabs for COVID testing. From this batch of 12 tests, only the crew member with the positive result was tested positive for SAR COV-2 on the Gene Xpert but negative by rapid antigen test (BinaxNOW). The rest of the crew and passenger were PCR negative on the Gene Xpert.

Conclusion

This person with the positive PCR result was detected on the first day after arriving at the Pohnpei anchorage on January 7, 2021. His PCR results were persistently positive with a high CT value above 40. All of the crew including the rescued boy, remained negative for the SARS CoV-2 virus and are without symptoms. The positive case had a positive rapid test for IgG antibodies and also in October 2020 while in the Philippines. Antibodies most likely become detectable 1–3 weeks after symptom onset, at which time evidence suggests that infectiousness was likely greatly decreased and that some degree of immunity from future infection had been developed. A rapid antigen test (BinaxNOW) was negative, while the PCR was positive for the ‘case’. This, along with the presence of antibody, clinical and epidemiological presentation, indicate that the PCR test detected viral remnants, not intact infectious virus.

After reviewing the test results and clinical condition of the crew on CM and consulting with experts from WHO and CDC, the MWG concludes that this a “historical case” which means that this individual is not acutely ill and not able to spread the disease. He was most likely infected before October 2020 while in the Philippines when his antibody test was positive for IgG and may have recovered before he joined the CM crew on September 1, 2020.

The ‘case’ can be safely released from isolation. The remainder of the crew and the one passenger have completed quarantine requirements and pose no threat to the community.

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Chronology of COVID-19 testing for CM

ID	Sex	Age	RT-PCR (7/25-27, 2020)	RT-PCR (Aug 17, 2020)	RT-PCR (August 28, 2020)	RT-PCR (Sept 16, 2020)	IgM/IgG (Oct 15, 2020)	PCR (Dec 20, 2020)	GX PCR (Jan 7, 2021)	GX PCR (January 18, 2021)	GX PCR (January 22, 2021)
JM	M	43	neg	neg			Neg	neg	neg	neg	neg
JB	M	36	neg	neg			Neg	neg	neg	neg	neg
TO	M	33	neg	neg			Neg	neg	neg	neg	neg
GR	M	57	POS	neg			Neg	neg	neg	neg	neg
JJ	M	60	POS	neg			Neg	neg	neg	neg	neg
MGD	M	30	neg		Neg at Quezon City		POS-IgG (10/9/2020) PCR-Neg	neg	POS CT-42	POS CT-41 IgG-POS	GX PCR-POS RT Ag-neg
AM	M	52	POS	neg			Neg	neg	neg	neg	neg
BS	M	33	neg	neg			Neg	neg	neg	neg	neg
GP	M	36	neg	neg			Neg	neg	neg	neg	neg
DK	M	55	neg	neg			Neg	neg	neg	neg	neg
JBB	M	31	neg	neg			Neg	neg	neg	neg	neg
MD	M	9				neg	Neg	neg	neg	neg	neg

Note: The PCR COVID-19 test cannot differentiate a person with active, infectious disease from a person who may have previously tested positive, and is no longer infectious, but is still shedding noninfectious remnants of the virus


Signature




 Dr. Eliaser Johnson



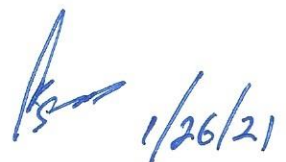
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