



## SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY

# New Antarctica Teams Take Extra Measures to Keep Coronavirus Out

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America's first flight to Antarctica after the southern winter arrived with crews taking extra safety measures to keep the coronavirus out.

The U.S. Air Force flight arrived Monday from Christchurch, New Zealand. The flight carried 106 passengers and crew, said Tony German. He is a representative for the U.S. Antarctic Program. The program carries out U.S. scientific research activities.

Antarctica is the driest, coldest and windiest place on Earth. It is the world's only continent with no recorded cases of the coronavirus. A worldwide effort aims to make sure incoming scientists and workers do not bring the virus with them.

German told The Associated Press the new arrivals will start getting ready for Antarctica's upcoming summer season. The team will replace much smaller crews that spent the Southern Hemisphere's winter in Antarctica.

Monday's flight was delayed for three weeks by big storms. That meant the passengers had an extended, six-week **quarantine**. German said the crews were first **isolated** in San Francisco for four days. They then spent five weeks isolated in New Zealand, where they received several coronavirus tests during their stay.

On their arrival at McMurdo Station - the main U.S. base in Antarctica - all crew members will still be required to wear face coverings for two weeks. "We are being **meticulous** to **ensure** nothing happens," German said.

If the virus does enter the station, German said measures have been established to test and isolate any infected individuals.

Still, the flight delays over recent weeks showed how difficult it can be to quickly remove people from Antarctica. German said it took more than a week for winter crews at McMurdo to remove snow from the storms and clear the **runway**.

The Boeing C-17 Globemaster that landed Monday afternoon was the first U.S. flight to arrive on the continent since early May.

Officials say unusual teamwork involving the U.S., China, Russia and other countries took place this year in an effort to keep the virus out. All countries are planning to reduce numbers at their stations for the summer. The number of people at McMurdo is set to reach 450 this summer. That is about one-third of the usual level.

Some planned research and building projects will be delayed. German said the main goals are to keep the stations running and prepare for next year's winter, while trying to do some science along the way. "The show must go on," he said.

I'm Bryan Lynn.

*The Associated Press reported on this story. Bryan Lynn adapted the report for VOA Learning English. Mario Ritter, Jr. was the editor.*

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## Words in This Story

**quarantine** – *n.* a situation in which a person or people are kept away from others in order to prevent the spread of disease

**isolate** – *v.* to be kept away from other people

**meticulous** – *adj.* very careful about doing something, to be very exact

**ensure** – *v.* to make sure something happens

**runway** – *n.* a long flat area from which airplanes take off and land

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