



AS IT IS

Pandemic Reaches Antarctica, Last Untouched Continent

December 23, 2020

COVID-19 has reached every continent on Earth.

Chilean officials say at least 58 people are infected with the new coronavirus at two military bases in Antarctica and on a navy ship.

So far, no other country with a presence in Antarctica has publicly reported any other cases.

Chile's army announced Monday that 36 people at the General Bernardo O'Higgins Riquelme Antarctic base tested **positive** for the virus. On Tuesday, the health minister for the country's Biobio **region** said there are 21 infections involving people from a navy supply ship that had been in Antarctica.

One other COVID-19 case was reported in Las Estrellas village, home to civilians who work at an air force base there. The health secretary for the larger Magallanes area said the navy supply ship had visited the port at Las Estrellas.

The army said the first group of 36 people includes 26 members of the military and 10 civilian contractors. It said none so far had shown **complications** from the virus.

Michelle Rogan-Finnemore is the head of the organization, Council of Managers of National Antarctic Programs. She said in a statement that the office received a report from the Chilean Antarctic Institute on Friday. The statement talked about positive cases on the Sergeant Aldea ship that would have left from two ports on Chile's mainland.

"We have yet to receive further **formal** information," she added.

The first three people on the Sergeant Aldea ship tested positive last week and all 208 crewmembers are being **quarantined** aboard that ship, the navy reported. The navy said the ship had serviced the base on the Trinity Peninsula between November 27 and December 10.

The National Science Foundation (NSF) is the American government agency that supervises U.S. programs in Antarctica. It said it knows about the reports of coronavirus infections among crew members on the Sergeant Aldea.

The NSF said U.S. Antarctic Program station workers have not been in physical contact with people at the Chilean stations struck by COVID-19. It also said the NSF will not exchange workers or accept visitors to U.S. Antarctic Program stations.

I'm Alice Bryant.

The Associated Press reported this story. Alice Bryant adapted it for Learning English. Caty Weaver was the editor.

Words in This Story

positive – adj. showing the presence of a particular germ, condition, or substance

region – n. a part of a country or of the world that is different or separate from other parts

complication – n. a disease or condition that happens in addition to another disease or condition

formal – adj. made or done in an official and usually public way

quarantine – v. to keep (a person or animal) away from others to prevent a disease from spreading