

Coronavirus in 2 foreign arrivals raises alarm in Thailand

July 13 2020, by Busaba Sivasomboon

Health authorities in Thailand are seeking to trace the contacts of two recent foreign arrivals in the country who were infected with the coronavirus and may have violated quarantine rules.

The two cases, an Egyptian military officer and the 9-year-old child of a diplomat from Africa, surfaced as Thailand marked seven weeks with no local transmissions of the coronavirus. With few foreigners allowed to legally enter the country, all other recent cases have involved Thai nationals repatriated from abroad.

That recently arrived foreigners were cleared for entry despite testing and quarantine procedures meant to keep them isolated has caused concern as Thailand considers how and when to reopen on a larger scale to foreign tourists.

The state Center for COVID-19 Situation Administration announced Monday that a member of an Egyptian military team that made stopovers last week at U-Tapao airport in eastern Thailand tested positive for the disease.

The Egyptian group arrived in Thailand via the United Arab Emirates and Pakistan on the night of July 8 and flew to Chengdu in China and back on July 9.

They were tested for coronavirus on July 10 and that same day members of the group visited several public locations, including a mall, in Rayong,

the province where U-Tapao airport is located.

By the time the results of the infected man's test were processed on July 11, the Egyptian team had departed for home.

Thai health authorities said they are tracing any contacts the Egyptian might have had during the visit, but have not announced any specific locations. The Bangkok Post newspaper reported that Rayong's governor has ordered the floors of the hotel where the Egyptian delegation stayed to be sealed, and two hotel staff who delivered room service to them to be quarantined.

The announcement of the case drew criticism on social media, both for the apparent laxity in enforcing isolation rules, and for failing to let the public know where the infected Egyptian visitor may have been.

The announcement of the Egyptian case came after the daughter of a foreign diplomat who came with her family from Sudan tested positive for the coronavirus. The family left Sudan on July 7 and reportedly tested negative on arrival in Bangkok, but she was retested after showing symptoms and then tested positive.

The family had been staying in a condominium in Bangkok where [health authorities](#) will now investigate any possible spread of the disease. Diplomats, unlike ordinary foreigners entering Thailand, do not have to stay at state quarantine facilities, but the rules guiding their quarantine condition are not detailed.

Thailand in early April banned scheduled passenger flights from abroad, but last week began allowing in foreign visitors on a controlled basis, limiting entry to those with existing family or work ties to the country, students, technical experts for businesses, investors and specially invited VIPs.

The number of foreign visitors allowed into the country each day is limited to 200, and they are supposed to travel on repatriation flights bringing Thai citizens home. All returnees, foreign and Thai, are subject to varying degrees of quarantine.

Thailand has had 3,220 cases of the [coronavirus](#), including 58 deaths.

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