

1st batch of approved COVID vaccines reaches Latin America

December 23 2020



The press photographs officials as the first shipment of the Pfizer COVID-19 vaccine to Mexico is pulled away, top right, after being unloaded from a DHL cargo plane at the Benito Juarez International Airport in Mexico City, Wednesday, Dec. 23, 2020. (AP Photo/Eduardo Verdugo)

The first formally approved batch of coronavirus vaccine to arrive in

Latin America was met with ceremonies fitting a VIP on Wednesday—flags, television cameras and Cabinet-level dignitaries lined up along the runway in Mexico.

On the other end of the region, meanwhile, Argentina announced it had approved two vaccines, including one for which it has no distribution deal and another from Russia.

A DHL flight touched down at Mexico City's international airport and a ground crew unloaded the first batches of ultra-cold vaccines produced by Pfizer and its German partner, BioNTech.

"Today is the beginning of the end of that pandemic," said Foreign Secretary Marcelo Ebrard, one of the officials who came to see the plane land.

The first vaccines were due to be given to health workers in Mexico City and the northern city of Saltillo starting on Thursday.

There were only 3,000 doses in the first shipment, which was meant to test logistics procedures.

Shipments of the Pfizer vaccine are scheduled to arrive in some other Latin American nations this week and vaccine candidates from other producers have already arrived in Brazil and some other nations pending formal approval by their health authorities.

Mexico expects to receive 1.4 million doses of the Pfizer-BioNTech product by the end of January.



Mexico's Health Secretary Jorge Alcocer holds up the DHL shipping label for the first shipment of the Pfizer COVID-19 vaccine to Mexico at the Benito Juarez International Airport in Mexico City, Wednesday, Dec. 23, 2020. (AP Photo/Eduardo Verdugo)



Mexican Foreign Minister Marcelo Ebrard walks with other government officials at the Benito Juarez International Airport to receive the first shipment of the Pfizer COVID-19 vaccine in Mexico City, Wednesday, Dec. 23, 2020. (AP Photo/Eduardo Verdugo)



The first shipment of the Pfizer COVID-19 vaccine is unloaded from a DHL cargo plane at the Benito Juarez International Airport in Mexico City, Wednesday, Dec. 23, 2020. (AP Photo/Eduardo Verdugo)



The first shipment of the Pfizer COVID-19 vaccine to Mexico is transported on the tarmac after being unloaded from a DHL cargo plane at the Benito Juarez International Airport in Mexico City, Wednesday, Dec. 23, 2020. (AP Photo/Eduardo Verdugo)



The first shipment of the Pfizer COVID-19 vaccine to Mexico is transported on the tarmac after being unloaded from a DHL cargo plane at the Benito Juarez International Airport in Mexico City, Wednesday, Dec. 23, 2020. (AP Photo/Eduardo Verdugo)



Mexico's Health Secretary Jorge Alcocer, left, coronavirus response leader Hugo López-Gatell, center, and Foreign Minister Marcelo Ebrard wait for the arrival of the first shipment of the Pfizer COVID-19 vaccine at the Benito Juarez International Airport in Mexico City, Wednesday, Dec. 23, 2020. (AP Photo/Eduardo Verdugo)

In Argentina, health authorities announced Wednesday that they too have approved the Pfizer vaccine, though the government has not yet been able to work out a deal to obtain it.

But the Health Ministry said it also had approved the Russian Sputnik V vaccine on an emergency basis and officials said an initial batch of 300,000 should arrive Thursday in the country of roughly 45 million people, which has recorded more than 42,000 deaths from COVID-19.

It referred to the Sputnik V as "a safe and effective therapeutic tool," though the vaccine has faced skepticism even in its homeland due to a rushed approval procedure.

Russian officials approved the vaccine on Aug. 11 before late-stage testing was finished on its effectiveness and safety.

But while they have announced a mass vaccination campaign, so far it does not include people over 60 and polls indicate that many Russians are unwilling to get the shot.

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