

Shot of the Antarctic: UK vaccines arrive near South Pole

October 7 2021

A delivery of COVID vaccines has arrived in Antarctica to inoculate British researchers stationed in the polar wilderness, the UK foreign ministry said Thursday.

The shipment was delivered to the British Antarctic Survey's Rothera Research Station, making the outpost the furthest destination in the British Overseas Territories to be supplied with jabs.

The AstraZeneca shots were flown from a Royal Air Force base in Britain via Senegal and the Falklands Islands before reaching the 23-member staff at the facility in the British Antarctic Territory.

The 10,000-mile (16,000-kilometre) journey across four continents concluded the UK government's commitment to supply vaccines to all the inhabited UK Overseas Territories and was achieved in partnership with the international development organisation, Crown Agents.

Crown Agents' chief executive Fergus Drake said the organisation had supplied the vaccines to "literally the ends of the earth", including the Pitcairn Islands in the Pacific and Tristan da Cunha in the south Atlantic.

Throughout the journey to the planet's southernmost extremity, vaccines were transported at controlled temperatures to keep the doses at their required two to eight degrees Celsius (35.6 to 46.4 Fahrenheit).

The entire journey had to be carefully planned and executed to ensure

the trip was completed in under 92 hours, to avoid spoilage of the vaccines.

Double doses of the vaccines will be available to the 23 members of the "overwintering" team at Rothera, which includes land and marine biologists, meteorologists, engineers, a dive officer, doctor, and chef.

British regulators approved the Pfizer-BioNTech and AstraZeneca vaccines in December last year, and the government began rolling out a mass vaccination programme soon afterwards.

Since then, 82.5 percent of people aged 16 and over have received two jabs of a vaccine, according to government data.

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