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Rare Tuberculosis Case Prompts Warning

A man with a rare and exceptionally dangerous form of tuberculosis has been placed in quarantine by the U.S. government after possibly exposing passengers and crew on two trans-Atlantic flights earlier this month, health officials said Tuesday.

This marks the first time since 1963 that the government issued a quarantine order. The last such order was to quarantine a patient with smallpox, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. The CDC urged people on the same flights to get checked for tuberculosis.

"From everything I heard today, I think the likelihood of [a ripple effect from the people on the plane] is pretty low, but I think the CDC is being appropriately cautious," said CBS News medical correspondent Dr. Jon LaPook. "After all, this is a very resistant kind of strain."

The infected man flew from Atlanta to Paris on May 12 aboard Air France Flight 385. He returned to North America on May 24 aboard Czech Air Flight 104 from Prague to Montreal.

CDC officials finally reached him by phone when he crossed back into the U.S. from Canada by car on May 24th, reports CBS News correspondent Nancy Cordes. He was flown back to Georgia on a CDC government plane on May 28.

He cooperated with authorities after learning he had an unusually dangerous form of TB. He voluntarily went to a hospital and is not facing prosecution, officials said.

The man is hospitalized in Atlanta in respiratory isolation, according to the World Health Organization.

He was potentially infectious at the time of the flights, so CDC officials recommended medical exams for cabin crew members on those flights, as well as passengers sitting in the same rows or within two rows.

The man was infected with "extensively drug-resistant" TB, also called XDR-TB. It resists many drugs used to treat the infection. Last year, there were two U.S. cases of that strain.

Because of antibiotics and other measures, the TB rate in the United States has been falling for years. Last year, it hit an all-time low of 13,767 cases, or about 4.6 cases per 100,000 Americans.

Tuberculosis kills nearly 2 million people each year worldwide.