

Despite Isolation, Five Returning Roosevelt Sailors Test Positive for Virus



USS Theodore Roosevelt Sailors run on the pier of Naval Base Guam on May 8. The Roosevelt's COVID-negative crew started returning from quarantine on April 29 and is preparing to return to sea. U.S. Navy/Mass Communication Specialist 3rd Class Zachary Wheeler

ARLINGTON, Va. – Five more Sailors from the sidelined aircraft carrier USS Theodore Roosevelt have tested positive for COVID-19, despite 14 days in isolation on Guam, according to the U.S. Navy.

The five, who previously tested COVID positive and were taken off the carrier, retested positive after returning to the carrier, despite “rigorous recovery criteria, exceeding [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention] guidelines,” Navy spokesperson Lt. Cmdr. Megan Isaac said on May 15.

[See: Hospital Ship Mercy Bids Farewell to Los Angeles](#)

Meanwhile, the Pentagon inspector general's office announced on May 11 that it had launched an evaluation of the Navy's policies to “prevent and mitigate” the spread of infectious diseases on ships and submarines and whether “mitigation measures that are effective in preventing the spread of COVID-19 were implemented across the fleet.”

Despite the latest setback, the Defense Department and the Navy “have learned much over the last few weeks on how to confront outbreaks on ships,” Pentagon spokesman Jonathan Rath Hoffman told a press briefing, noting that only two warships – the Roosevelt and the destroyer USS Kidd – out of 90 Navy vessels at sea have confronted the virus. He noted the Navy

was able to respond more quickly and limit the outbreak on the Kidd because of lessons learned with the Roosevelt.



Capt. Carlos Sardiello, current commanding officer of the Theodore Roosevelt, talks with the families of Roosevelt Sailors during a virtual town hall meeting on May 10. U.S. Navy/Mass Communication Specialist 3rd Class Conner D. Blake Hoffman also cited Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Gen. Mark Milley's frequent claim that "'the TR could be at sea tomorrow if called upon and would be able to fight through this outbreak."

The new COVID-positive results aboard the Roosevelt come as the carrier, docked in Guam since March 27, prepares to return to sea after a bow-to-stern deep-cleaning process by about 700 crew members. The rest of the ship's crew, more than 4,000 in total, are disembarked on Guam and either isolated or quarantined. More than 1,100 Sailors from the Roosevelt tested positive for COVID. To return to the carrier after 14 days observation, Sailors had to test negative in two successive tests. The infected five were among hundreds of crew members who have returned to the Roosevelt since late April.

"While onboard, these five TR Sailors self-monitored and adhered to the strict social distancing protocols established by the Navy," Isaac said in a statement. However, they developed flu-like symptoms "and did the right thing reporting to medical for evaluation," the statement added.

The five Sailors were immediately removed from the Roosevelt and placed back into isolation. Their close contacts were mapped, and they are receiving the required medical care. "A small number of other Sailors who came in close contact with these individuals were also removed from the ship and tested. They will remain in quarantine pending retest results," the statement said.

"A process has been put in place to quickly address the

issue," Hoffman told the briefing. "We do want to get to a place where there is zero infections on the ship and the entire ship's complement is back at sea, but that may take little bit more time," he said.

After becoming the first Navy ship to suffer a COVID-19 outbreak at sea, the Roosevelt was caught in a controversy that led to Capt. Brett Crozier's removal from command and the resignation a week later of then-acting Navy Secretary Thomas Modly, who had ordered Crozier ousted.

Following a first preliminary inquiry, the Navy initiated a probe into Crozier's actions that was widened by Modly's successor, acting Navy Secretary James McPherson, to include the entire Pacific Fleet chain of command. Some, including reportedly Chief of Naval Operations Mike Gilday, recommended Crozier be reinstated after the preliminary probe ended.