



FSM Information Services & Pohnpei State Government/Enginkehlap Joint Press Release

MV Chief Mailo Returns to FSM After More Than One Year Abroad; One Isolated But Confirmed Case of COVID-19 on Board, Citizens Encouraged To Keep Distance From the Vessel & Quarantine Sites Until Further Notice

PALIKIR, Pohnpei—On January 6th, 2021, the MV Chief Mailo—a cargo and passenger vessel owned by the Government of the Federated States of Micronesia (FSM), typically homeported in Chuuk State, entered Pohnpei State’s anchorage, inside Pohnpei’s lagoon. The vessel had previously left the FSM in late 2019 for drydock-based repairs in the Republic of the Philippines. The crew have been strictly confined to the ship since September 22nd, 2020. On January 7th, twelve (12) crew were tested for COVID-19. One (1) individual was tested twice and, on both occasions, positive for COVID-19. The FSM National and Pohnpei State Governments confirm that the case is classified as an imported case, and does not present any immediate risk of the virus spreading to the broader community. Before any National or State mandates take effect, together or separately, His Excellency David W. Panuelo, President of the FSM, and the Honorable Reed B. Oliver, Governor of Pohnpei State, will make certain all positive indications are validated.

The MV Chief Mailo is undergoing the same security protection regime as the MV Caroline Voyager did when it left Japan in early November 2020. The individual detected with COVID-19 was detected whilst in quarantine, and has had no contact with individuals in the community; thus, they do not present any immediate risk of the virus spreading to the broader Pohnpeian community. As of January 7th, 2021, the healthcare workers who performed the tests on the crew are quarantined at the Emergency Medical Unit (aka China Star Hotel) in Pohnpei State, and the crew remain in isolation on the MV Chief Mailo. The healthcare workers have been tested for COVID-19, and their results are negative.

National and State law enforcement and border protection staff are maintaining the ship’s security on a 24/7 schedule. Citizens and residents of Pohnpei State are requested to remain distant from the MV Chief Mailo until further notice. The vessel itself is an isolation unit; no one is allowed to go onboard, and the crew are not allowed to disembark at any time. The FSM and State Task Forces are ensuring that there is no contact with the vessel to keep the risk of exposure to bare minimum.



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The FSM National Government made the decision to return the MV Chief Mailo home in late December on the premise that the Government had two distinct choices: to see individuals in its skeleton crew leave their service in the Government, and thus force the Government to abandon the ship in the Philippines, which already was at high risk of piracy; or, to return the vessel to the FSM at the nearest opportunity. The Government chose for the vessel's return to the Nation. The FSM National Government, having tested the crew of the MV Chief Mailo half a dozen times since September 22nd, 2020, with all results being negative, was of the view that such a return would be safe.

At this time, there are no Government mandates regarding physical distancing, mask wearing, etc. However, both the National and Pohnpei State Governments continue to encourage citizens to practice physical distancing, mask wearing, and other precautionary measures such as frequently washing hands.

Citizens and residents of Pohnpei State are encouraged to maintain a safe distance from the MV Chief Mailo, and the Emergency Medical Unit quarantine facility, until further notice. The FSM National & Pohnpei State Governments continue to collaborate together on approved processes and procedures to minimize further spread of the virus.