

# *Public Health Ministry confirms 5 additional COVID-19 cases*

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Havana, March 20 (RHC)-- Cuban Health Minister, Dr. José Angel Portal Miranda, confirmed that after the tests carried out this Friday, the number of COVID-19 cases increased by 5, bringing to 21 the number of infected people on the island.

The five cases contracted the disease abroad, and 716 patients, suspects of carrying the coronavirus, are currently hospitalized.

On the Round Table TV and radio program, the minister said that the national plan for the prevention and confrontation of COVID-19 implemented in the country since January has permitted the surveillance of the Cuban population and of people entering the country.

So far, the surveillance system and the three laboratories that are available in the national territory: the reference center of the Pedro Kourí Institute of Tropical Medicine -IPK-, the molecular biology laboratory of Villa Clara and the one in Santiago de Cuba, have made it possible to confirm 21 cases on the island.

Of these, he said, ten have been foreigners and 11 are nationals who have come from countries with transmission and two people who have also been linked to other people who have entered the national territory from areas with the transmission.

Portal Miranda added that the confirmed patients remain clinically stable at this point. He also referred to the evacuation of a U.S. patient carried out Friday morning, a process which he described as well-coordinated and which was carried out under all the safety protocols in an air ambulance.

Portal said the island is keeping a close eye on the rest of the people in the country who may have respiratory symptoms or may have been linked to foreigners who entered the country and who may have symptoms.

"For us, any case that is related to people who have come from a country that is transmitting, even if they do not have respiratory symptoms, is a suspicious patient until we rule out the contrary," he said.

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