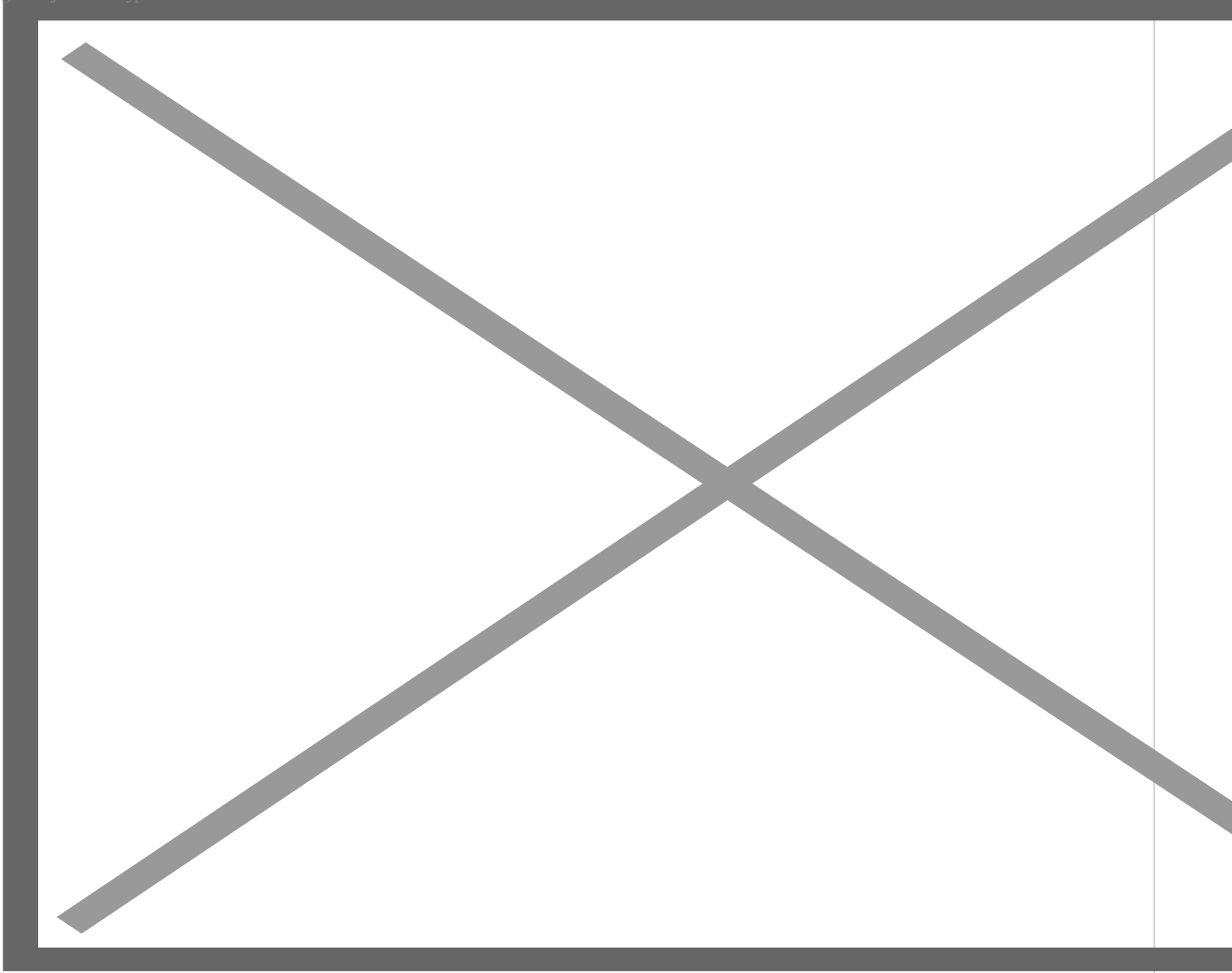# New Zealand detects first community COVID-19 case in two months

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New Zealand has been praised for its handling of the pandemic with just 25 deaths in a population of five million. (Photo: Fiona Goodall / Reuters]

Auckland, January 25 (RHC)-- New Zealand health officials have confirmed the first case of COVID-19 in the community in more than two months, sparking urgent contract-tracing efforts north of Auckland. A 56-year-old woman who recently returned from Europe tested positive 10 days after completing a compulsory two weeks in managed quarantine. She had noticed symptoms several days before getting tested.

Contact tracing was under way after it was revealed the woman and her husband spent several days travelling around the Northland region while she was potentially infectious, visiting about 30 different locations.

Health Minister Chris Hipkins said it was too soon to decide whether a full or partial lockdown would be reintroduced. "We don't know the origin or the strain of the infection," he told a press conference on Sunday.

The woman returned to New Zealand on December 30 after spending four months in Europe – mainly in Spain and the Netherlands – and was released from an Auckland quarantine hotel on January 13. New Zealand Director-General of Health Ashley Bloomfield said the woman returned two negative tests while in isolation, and her husband had not shown any symptoms.

This marks the first known case of community transmission in New Zealand since November 18th. Authorities were reviewing closed-circuit television footage to see if the woman contracted the virus while in the managed quarantine facility.

More than 600 people who had spent time in the hotel have been asked to self-isolate and be re-tested for COVID-19. It is the second time a returnee has developed coronavirus symptoms after being cleared to leave a quarantine facility in New Zealand.

A man who returned from India in August returned two negative tests in isolation but did not start showing symptoms until five days after his release.

New Zealand has been widely praised for its handling of the pandemic with just 25 deaths from 1,927 confirmed virus cases in a population of five million.

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