

U.S. seizes ventilators destined for Barbados



Bridgetown, April 6 (RHC)-- The U.S. government has seized 20 ventilators destined for Barbados, the island's Minister of Health and Wellness Jeffrey Bostic reported on Sunday.

"They were seized in the United States. Paid for, but seized, so we are trying to see exactly what is going to happen there," Bostic said, explaining that the ventilators donated to the Barbados government were barred from exportation.

"Ventilators are one of the most in-demand items in the world today and Barbados is merely wrestling with the other 203 countries and territories around the world seeking to secure as many of these pieces of equipment as possible," the official added. The health minister did not disclose the U.S. city or state where the seizure took place.

The government reassured that the 48 ventilators that are currently available "appear to be more than enough with only three of the country's 56 COVID-19 patients in need of ventilators." However, Bostic reports that over 150 ventilators had been ordered and paid for from more than five different sources and stressed that Prime Minister Mia Mottley had made a "blank check" available for the purchase of such critical supplies.

Meanwhile, five ventilators donated by Barbados-born international pop star Rihanna would reach the island soon.

On Friday, U.S. President Donald Trump enacted the Defense Production Act (DPA) to block exports of surgical masks manufactured by the 3M company to Canada.

By implementing this Korean War-era national security law, the Department of Homeland Security and the Federal Emergency Management Agency are able of applying measures that allow the Trump administration to secure the medical supplies it deems necessary. The DPA may also compel a private company to prioritize serving requests from the U.S. federal government.

Described by analysts as a modern form of piracy, the hoarding of medical supplies by the United States is also affecting other countries' capabilities to fight the COVID-19 pandemic.

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