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Date: 31st July, 2021

For Immediate Release

PRESS RELEASE
VIRAL ALLEGATIONS AGAINST COVID-19 TESTING IN GHANA

Our attention has been drawn to number of media and videos from travellers who have tested positive at the Kotoka International Airport and must undergo a mandatory isolation. Notably amongst the publications are videos being circulated by two women who reported for isolation on 21st July and 28th July respectively. The first has been discharged after three days while the second is due for re-test. The women are citizens of UK and USA but are originally Ghanaians. While the Ghana Health Service empathises with persons who test positive on arrival and the attendant stresses that such an event presents to passengers, we are also concerned at the many false reportage being circulated especially in social media.

OUTCOME OF TESTING AT THR KIA (1ST SEPTEMBER 2020 TO 31ST JULY 2021)

Since the KIA was re-opened to international travel on 1st September 2020, a total of 398,803 passengers have so far been tested for COVID-19 upon arrival at the KIA as of 31st July 2021. Of these 2,386 have tested positive for COVID-19 representing 0.6% of the total Antigen tests conducted at the KIA for arriving passengers. Out of those who have tested positive, 1494 (63%) have been males and 892 (37%) have been females. Again, 987 (41%) have been Ghanaians and 1,399 (59%) non-Ghanaians. Ghana Health Service has full confidence in the in the FDA approved testing systems at the airport. Additionally there's no basis for the above 0.6% to be seen as false positives.

ALLEGATIONS BY MS. MAVIS BOATENG

Ms. Mavis Boateng in the viral video made a lot of allegations including the fact that she presented a negative PCR test from her country of origin and as such, she cannot test positive on arrival. It is worth noting that a person can present a negative PCR test on arrival and still test positive at KIA because he or she may be incubating the virus. Also your test result status is specifically with reference to the date of doing the test, so any risky activities afterwards can change your status, She also made an allegation that test/result at KIA are fake. This is also not true because the test conducted at KIA meets all international standards and is constantly being monitored by the Food and Drugs Authority (FDA).

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She demonstrated her allegations with a COVID-19 RDT kit which is not registered/approved by FDA for testing of COVID-19 and therefore not recognized by our protocol. **Test results of all passengers are printed and handed over to the traveler at the airport.** The Service would like to put on record that immediately her video was shared, the Director-General and the Public Relations Officer visited her and other travelers at the MPlaza Hotel Isolation Centre on Saturday 24th July, 2021 and interacted with them to explain the rationale for the country specific protocols.

For the record Mavis Boateng arrived at the KIA on the 21st July 2021 and tested positive to COVID-19 at 11:52:25pm on the same day. She identified herself as a UK national. Records provided by her indicated that her country of departure was France with Air France (AF 586) for a family visit in Ghana. On the said day, 2,083 passengers were tested upon arrival at the KIA, out of which 53 of the tested positive for COVID-19. Of these 53, there were 19 Ghanaians, 9 were USA nationals, 9 Nigerians, 4 UK nationals including Mavis Boateng and the remaining 15 being nationals of 11 other countries. Mavis Boateng has since tested negative with the same testing system and has been discharged.

ALLEGATIONS BY MS. IVY ANKRAH

In this video, she made so many allegations including a similar one like the one above. She mentioned discrimination at KIA where people with foreign passports are made to undergo mandatory isolation at a hotel when tested positive in order to exploit them. This is entirely false. The **protocol for isolation** is explained in detail in this release.

She also mentioned that she has been held captive. This is also very **ludicrous and false** because she was given a room to lodge at the Isolation Centre (Hotel) after testing positive at KIA but refused to enter the room and rather opted to stay at the lobby of the Hotel to mobilize other people who have tested positive to revolt against the security and health staff at the hotel.

For the records, Ivy Ankrah tested positive for COVID-19 at the KIA on 28TH July 2021 at 3:57:09pm after having departed from the USA on Delta Airline (DL 157). She identified herself as a citizen of USA. On the said day, 2,085 passengers were tested upon arrival at the airport, out of which 44 of them tested positive to COVID-19. Of those who tested positive, 18 were Ghanaians, 9 were nationals of the USA (including Ivy Ankrah), 3 were UK nationals and the remaining 14 were of 10 different nationalities.

A repeat PCR test on Ivy Ankrah on day 3 showed a positive COVID-19 result. She will therefore be kept in isolation till she tests negative for COVID-19.

RESPONSES TO EVENTS

We wish to put on record that Ghana has guidelines on COVID-19 for international travel and the contents of this guideline has been circulated through various platforms including the Ghana Health Service Website, the Ghana Airports Company website and the International Air Travel Association's Timatic website. The Guideline on COVID-19 for Ghana spells out the requirements for international arrivals in Ghana and the various processes in place at the airport and beyond for passengers. This guideline has been implemented since the 1st of September 2020 and has undergone some revisions this year. Our goal as a Service among many others is to protect the health of the population through the implementation of activities identified as important in achieving this objective. To this end, we wish to address some erroneous impressions created in the minds of some sections of the population by the false information being circulated by some arriving passengers in Ghana.

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Negative PCR test prior to travel and positive Immunofluorescent Assay test on Arrival

One erroneous impression being created by persons who test positive on arrival is the fact that they hold a negative PCR test result and so cannot be positive. This is untrue. One's COVID-19 status is not permanent, and the negative PCR result is as of the time the sample was taken for testing. One could be infected during the days before flying and this is a scientific fact. In addition, one may even be incubating the virus (i.e. have the virus in their body but hasn't gotten to the point where a test can detect it) hence can still show negative for the PCR test and be positive by the time they arrive in Ghana. The fact that these travellers are made to do these tests at least twice a week may be an indication of them being in a high risk profession of contracting the virus.

Authenticity of Airport Testing

Some reportage have raised doubts about the genuineness or authenticity of the test being conducted at the Kotoka International Airport. The testing at the airport prior to implementation underwent rigorous quality checks and was found to be highly sensitive. In addition, the FDA conducts regular monitoring of the work at the airport to ensure that it is up to standard. The service provider at the airport also has their own internal quality control checks to ensure results produced are accurate.

Delays on Arrival

There has also been reported issues of delays experienced particularly by persons who test positive on arrival. This is due to the fact that confirmatory tests are done to validate the results that are positive. While this may be inconvenient for the passenger, that is part of the quality assurance the laboratory has instituted to ensure only persons who are truly positive are taken into isolation.

Unwarranted Attacks on Port Health Staff

We also note with concern, the unwarranted and incessant attacks on some port health staff by some agitated passengers especially those who test positive for COVID-19. This is highly unacceptable to say the least. While we appreciate the occasional frustrations passengers go through at the airport due to one challenge or the other, the Ghana Health Service cannot accept the verbal and sometimes physical attacks meted to our staff. We wish to serve notice to all arriving passengers to desist from attacking our staff otherwise such passengers will be handed over to the security agencies for necessary actions.

Isolation Centres

By our protocols, positive cases are to be under mandatory isolation. Ghanaians are to be isolated at the National Isolation Centre at a cost fully borne by the State, however persons who opt out of this facility would then bear their own cost. Selected hotels with different price ranges are available for foreigners to undergo isolation.

Repeat testing is done on Day 3 for all positive cases and if negative you are discharged, however if you are positive then you continue isolation till Day 7 when a repeat test is done.

We will like to assure Ghanaians that as a Service, we will continue to work in the interest of public health and safety of all Ghanaian citizens and residents of Ghana by instituting measures that will reduce the risk of importation of the disease into the country.

In conclusion the service would like to assure the general public of our full confidence in the FDA approved Covid-19 testing system at the Kotoka International Airport and will continue to enforce the testing at the airport.

SIGNED
DR PATRICK KUMA ABOAGYE
DIRECTOR GENERAL
GHANA HEALTH SERVICE

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