Beat: Health

26 passengers quarantined at Sydney Airport after falling ill

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USPA News - More than two dozen passengers who became ill during a Qantas flight from Chile to Australia were treated by paramedics and placed in quarantine Thursday when the aircraft landed at Sydney airport, health officials said, adding that the symptoms were consistent with norovirus infection. The incident happened on board Qantas flight 28, a Boeing 747-400, when 26 passengers became violently ill during the nearly 14-hour long flight.

The aircraft was flying from Comodoro Arturo Merino Benítez International Airport in the Chilean capital of Santiago to Sydney Kingsford Smith Airport. The Ambulance Service of New South Wales (NSW) said it dispatched seven ambulance units, including a patient transport bus, to the airport`s international airport after an emergency.000 call was received at approximately 5:10 p.m. local time. Paramedics assessed a total of 26 passengers who were suffering from vomiting and diarrhea. "Of those, sixteen patients required transport to hospital, three of whom were stretcher patients," an NSW Ambulance spokesperson said in an e-mailed statement. "A total of 10 patients were transported to the Prince of Wales Hospital, the remaining six were transported to St George Hospital." The NSW Ministry of Health said the passengers, all from the same group, developed the symptoms during the 14-hour flight, and said the illness is consistent with norovirus infection that is a common cause of outbreaks of gastroenteritis in Australia and elsewhere. Qantas said other passengers were advised to keep a close eye on their health over the next two days. "NSW Health has provided Qantas with a letter and factsheet about viral gastro to distribute to all departing passengers, as well as advice for cleaning and cabin staff," a ministry spokesperson said. "[NSW] Ambulance will assess the sick passengers, and if well enough to leave they can be cohorted through the airport with minimal exposure to other passengers." Qantas said it is believed the patients contracted the illness before boarding the aircraft, but said the symptoms were not evident until they were already on the plane. Quarantine crews boarded the aircraft, which was carrying more than 300 people, and inspected its interior before allowing it to move to the terminal at Sydney airport. "The Australian" newspaper said the patients, all traveling in the same group, were returning to Australia after seeing Pope Francis at World Youth Day in Brazil. It said the victims are students from several Melbourne schools and were moved next to the toilets at the back of the plane and attended to by nurses and at least one doctor who were passengers.

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