

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

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May 7, 2026

Honorable Marco Rubio
Secretary of State
U.S. Department of State
2201 C Street NW
Washington, DC 20520

Dr. Jay Bhattacharya
Acting Director
Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
1600 Clifton Road
Atlanta, GA 30329

Dear Secretary Marco Rubio and Acting Director Jay Bhattacharya,

I write with urgent concern regarding the reported hantavirus outbreak aboard the Oceanwide Expeditions cruise ship MV Hondius, currently located in or near Spain, where American citizens, including one of my constituents, remain onboard and in need of immediate medical attention, evacuation support, and consular assistance. I urge your agencies to assess the situation and develop a repatriation plan by the end of the day.

At the time of this writing, three individuals have reportedly died from hantavirus, seventeen Americans are onboard and in need of assistance, and more than 145 passengers and crew remain aboard the vessel. This outbreak was first publicly reported at least four days ago. Despite the severity of the situation, my office has seen no evidence of a sufficient federal response to protect the Americans on board or to ensure their safe return home.

On Thursday, May 7, my office made contact with a constituent from the district I represent who is currently aboard the ship. The information we received about the conditions facing passengers and crew is deeply alarming. These Americans are trapped in a dangerous and deteriorating public health situation, and they deserve more than passive monitoring or delayed coordination.

The Department of State and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) each have clear responsibilities in this situation. The Department of State is responsible for protecting American citizens overseas, particularly when they face life-threatening medical conditions and have limited ability to leave. The CDC is responsible for providing public health guidance, coordinating with domestic and international health authorities, and supporting appropriate disease-control measures to protect Americans during serious outbreaks. The continued lack of clear action, public communication, and direct support for these Americans is unacceptable.

Accordingly, I request immediate answers to the following questions:

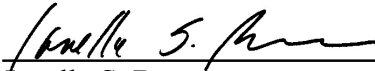
1. When exactly did the Department of State, the Secretary's office, the U.S. Embassy in Spain, the CDC, or any other federal agency first become aware of this outbreak?
2. Since becoming aware of the outbreak, what specific actions has the federal government taken to assist the seventeen Americans on board?
3. Has the Department of State directly contacted each American citizen on board or their families? If not, why not?

4. Has the Department of State, CDC, or any other federal agency requested or coordinated medical evacuation, quarantine support, hospitalization, public health guidance, or transportation for the affected Americans?
5. Which federal agencies are currently involved in the response, and who is the lead official responsible for coordinating assistance?
6. Have the Department of State and CDC engaged with Spanish authorities, the cruise operator, local hospitals, or public health officials to secure medical care, safe disembarkation, appropriate infection-control measures, and safe return travel?
7. What is the current plan and timeline to ensure these Americans receive medical treatment and are returned safely to the United States?

The families of these Americans deserve answers. The Americans on board deserve action. Four days is more than enough time for the federal government to establish a coordinated response, communicate clearly with those affected, and ensure that U.S. citizens are not left stranded in a deadly outbreak overseas. The seventeen Americans on board, including my constituent, are being abandoned by their government. They have no guidance and no support to ensure their safe return home.

I urge the Department of State and CDC to act immediately and provide my office with a written response no later than 5:00 pm ET on Thursday, May 7, 2026.

Sincerely,



Janelle S. Bynum
Member of Congress