

US requires travelers from China test negative for COVID amid surging infections and deaths

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On Wednesday, the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) announced that, beginning on January 5, all travelers flying from China to the US will be required to show a negative COVID-19 test result from within two days of their flight departure. Similar measures have also been implemented by Italy, Japan, Malaysia, Taiwan and India.

Over the past month, the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) has rapidly lifted the Zero-COVID policy which had kept the country's per capita death rate by far the lowest among major countries. In a matter of weeks, hundreds of millions of Chinese people have been infected with COVID-19, hospitals have been overrun with patients and are implementing triage care, and morgues have had to suspend burial services.

In effect, the CCP is condensing into the span of a few months the years-long and ongoing process of mass infections and deaths that have taken place in nearly every other country. They have adopted the "herd immunity" strategy pioneered in the US, Brazil, India and other countries which are now hypocritically imposing a test requirement on travelers from China, which will do nothing to stop the deepening global catastrophe.

In a brief thread commenting on the one-sided character of the CDC's measure, American epidemiologist Dr. Eric Feigl-Ding noted: "Ironically—US has surges nationwide, and same for Europe too. So why focus the airport inbound testing for just China?" He added: "I'm not against [airport testing] per se—but thinking that only China flight arrivals need to be tested while arrivals from other countries don't—doesn't make any sense given the worldwide spread of COVID."

Boston University School of Public Health Professor Dr. Jon Levy similarly commented: "So we are requiring a negative COVID test to fly from China to the US,

because China now lacks mitigation policies or adequate surveillance, but not for any other country or domestically? Not arguing for the latter, but this is illogical, hypocritical, and stigmatizing."

A CDC press release on the new measure states that its goal is "to slow the spread of COVID-19 in the United States during the surge in COVID-19 cases in [China]." It denounces China's "reduced testing and case reporting" and "lack of adequate and transparent epidemiological and viral genomic sequence data," which "are critical to monitor the case surge effectively and decrease the chance for entry of a novel variant of concern."

What hypocrisy and cynicism!

Over the past year, the Biden administration has overseen the dismantling of virtually all COVID-19 testing, data tracking and reporting. Regarding testing and genomic sequencing, the US is arguably the worst in the world relative to economic output and technological capacity.

At present, the US is in the midst of likely the third-largest wave of infections since the beginning of the pandemic, according to wastewater data. This reality is completely at odds with official infection figures, due to the closure of free PCR testing facilities across the US this year and the switch to unreported at-home antigen testing.

The CDC is doing nothing to stop the deepening surge in the US, which has been driven in large part by holiday travel from Thanksgiving to the present. In the past month, tens of millions of Americans have flown back-and-forth across the country and internationally without testing, masking, or any anti-COVID mitigation measures whatsoever.

Regarding genomic sequencing, throughout the pandemic the US has sequenced relatively low levels of

positive PCR tests, and done so very slowly.

In Wednesday's press release, the CDC also announced that airports in Seattle and Los Angeles will join their Traveler-based Genomic Surveillance program (TGS), bringing the total number of airports involved to a dismal seven and the "number of weekly flights covered to approximately 500 from at least 30 countries." In other words, an infinitesimal fraction of international travelers to the US are tested for COVID-19 and positive results sequenced.

Furthermore, just two months ago the CDC was caught deliberately covering up the spread of new variants.

For nearly a month, from September 24 to October 14, 2022, the CDC violated its own rules and withheld data showing that the Omicron BQ.1 and BQ.1.1 subvariants were becoming dominant across the US. This was among the most significant cover-ups by the CDC since the start of the pandemic, but was seriously reported on only by the *World Socialist Web Site*. It took place just weeks after US President Joe Biden falsely claimed that "the pandemic is over."

In recent weeks, the Omicron XBB subvariant, which caused a surge of infections and reinfections in Singapore and other countries this fall, has become dominant in the Northeast region and will likely become dominant across the US in the coming weeks. Numerous scientists have raised the alarm about this subvariant, while the CDC, the White House and the bourgeois media have done nothing to warn the public about this danger.

The measures against China are entirely political and in no way meant to ensure the public health of the American, Chinese or world populations. Underscoring this fact, travelers are allowed to use results from a self-administered rapid antigen test, which is known to be more likely to return a false negative result. Anyone who tests negative two days before departure is liable to catch COVID-19 and become infectious in the subsequent period. As is the case for every other country, there will be no mandatory testing or quarantining upon arrival for travelers who could very well be infectious.

Furthermore, these measures are not being imposed on any other country, despite the fact that COVID-19 is now spreading unchecked throughout the world.

The CDC press release cynically concludes: "The approach laid out, when layered with existing CDC recommendations such as masking during travel, self-monitoring for symptoms, and testing for three days after arrival from international travel, will help make travel safer, healthier, and more responsible by reducing spread

on planes, in airports, and at destinations."

But throughout the past year, the CDC and other public health agencies globally have scrapped previous COVID-19 testing requirements, as well as mask mandates, for national and international travel.

The new CDC policy follows a meeting last week between US Secretary of State Antony Blinken and Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi in which Blinken denounced China for a lack of "transparency" regarding COVID-19. American imperialism is increasingly utilizing the COVID crisis, which it has fomented in China, to escalate the threat of war.

For over two years, US imperialism and its media mouthpieces have continuously demanded that China scrap Zero-COVID. After Apple, Nike and other major corporations threatened to move production from China, the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) relented and lifted all public health measures, including mass testing, contact tracing, lockdowns, the safe isolation and quarantining of infected and exposed people, travel restrictions and more.

The scrapping of Zero-COVID in China is reactionary and must be counterposed by a comprehensive public health program fought for by the Chinese and international working class. But the measures implemented by the US and other countries against China will do nothing to stop the spread of the pandemic and will be used only to escalate military aggression against the country. China will be vilified for any new variants detected, and all the lies told about the "Wuhan lab leak" will be repackaged and disseminated once again.

The Zero-COVID policy that had been in place in China proved to be the only viable program to stop the spread of COVID-19, but it could not be sustained on a nationalist basis and within the framework of world imperialism. Only through world socialist revolution, in which all of mankind's economic resources and technology are geared towards providing for human need instead of private profit, will it be possible to massively expand public health globally and put an end to the pandemic.



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