

USA to lift southern Africa travel ban

US President Joe Biden has announced the lifting of travel restrictions imposed on southern African countries following the emergence of the Covid-19 Omicron variant last month.



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The travel ban is expected to be officially lifted on Friday morning.

The variant was announced by South African scientists at the National Institute of Communicable Diseases (NICD) and led to countries swiftly closing their borders to South Africa.

“Since I issued that [travel ban], [American] health officials, in collaboration with the South African scientists who originally reported the variant, have made substantial progress in understanding the Omicron variant.

“In light of these changed circumstances, and based on the recommendation of the CDC, I have determined that it is in the

interests of the United States to revoke [the ban]. The travel restrictions imposed by that proclamation are no longer necessary to protect public health,” he said.

The travel ban was also extended to Botswana, Eswatini, Lesotho, Malawi, Mozambique, Namibia and Zimbabwe.

Biden explained that the travel ban was aimed at slowing the spread of the variant and enable the US to implement measures to fight the variant.

“On the same day that the World Health Organisation classified the Omicron variant as a variant of concern...I issued [travel restrictions]. That proclamation generally suspended and restricted the entry into the United States of non-citizens of the United States who were physically present within [southern Africa].

“I took that action to slow the spread of the Omicron variant into the United States and to enable the United States to implement appropriate mitigation measures while new information emerged about the variant,” Biden said.

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