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# Puerto Rico Treasury facing potential loss of over \$20M due to computer virus

By Luis J. Valentín on March 7, 2017

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SAN JUAN – More than \$20 million in tax revenue could have not been received because of a virus affecting Puerto Rico Treasury Department computers since late Sunday.

That was Deputy Secretary of Internal Revenue Francisco Parés's reply to a Caribbean Business question regarding the impact on government coffers from a computer virus that affected the virtual tax-return filing, revenue collection and government lottery systems.

Chief Information Officer Luis Arocho said taxpayer and government information on Treasury servers was not affected by the virus, which is under investigation. Officials added that local and federal authorities, including the FBI, have been notified. Moreover, it is still unknown whether a hacker directed the attack at Treasury.

Meanwhile, the agency said its virtual collection systems are already operating and that it hopes to reestablish the traditional lottery systems later in the day. However, the virtual tax-return filing system will not be available for two to three days.

During a press conference Tuesday in La Fortaleza, officials explained that Treasury was affected by a malicious "ransomware" virus, which encrypts certain information acquired in the attack, until a ransom payment, in this case using bitcoin cryptocurrency, is made in exchange for releasing the information.

Arocho said technology firm CompSec Direct is being retained by the Puerto Rico government to fly down from Washington, D.C., and assist in dealing with the problem.

"We will not skimp on expenses to protect taxpayer and government information," said the official, who was not able to specify the cost of repairing the systems.

## Effect on Ports

The virus has also caused delays in the receipt of merchandise by local businesses and individuals, Ports Authority Press Secretary Juan Carlos Hernández confirmed.

"People receiving merchandise have to go directly to the Treasury Department to pay for it. [The problem] is delaying the pickup of merchandise," he said, adding that ports' operations are, nevertheless, flowing normally, although he said he was not aware of how much cargo was held up because Treasury was currently working on the issue.

*Eva Lloréns contributed to this report.*



Puerto Rico Treasury Department headquarters in San Juan (File)

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