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**HEADLINE:** Travel experts say Alabama boycott of Aruba likely to have little impact

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**BODY:**

The Alabama governor's call for a tourist boycott of Aruba, where a teen from his state has been missing since May 30, had little or no immediate impact and is unlikely to deter trips to the Caribbean island, travel experts said.

"We really have not seen a significant change in interest in travel to Aruba," said Justin McNaull, a spokesman for AAA Travel.

He said that in the weeks following Natalee Holloway's disappearance on the final night of a class trip, amid fears she had been murdered and intense media coverage, a few travelers decided to seek other destinations. But that's not likely now, even with a boycott call.

"From a longer-term standpoint, as travelers we have a relatively short-term memory, whether it's terrorism or hurricanes or other events that cast a negative light on a destination," he said.

While the Holloway case is tragic, he said, "it's seen as an isolated incident."

Gov. Bob Riley called for the boycott of the Dutch Caribbean island on Tuesday on behalf of Holloway's family, who have been critical of the island government's investigation into her disappearance. Three young men were held for a while in an investigation into Holloway's possible rape

and murder, but a court ruled there was not enough evidence to continue to hold them.

Riley's call was reported by national news organizations, but he hasn't yet sent letters to his fellow governors asking for their support, Riley spokesman Jeff Emerson said Friday. Emerson said those letters will go out next week.

"It's not going to be a short-term effort," Emerson said. "He doesn't just plan on making an announcement and that's it."

But those who research boycotts say this one may be a futile effort.

"No, it won't work. It's pretty much like a warning," said Usha Haley, professor of international business and director of the Global Business Center at the University of New Haven.

"Generally speaking, I doubt a boycott called for by the governor of one state would have significant impact on Aruba's tourism," said John Frendreis, a political science professor at Loyola University in Chicago.

Frendreis, who called Riley's announcement "a symbolic gesture," said it's unlikely that one family's tragedy would prompt political moves in other states.

Dutch tourism officials say if the travel boycott affects anyone, it will be the island people who have worked hard to assist the family and whose livelihood depends on tourism.

"Who it really hurts is the right people who have fought - the hotel owners, the waiters, the people who have helped this family providing rooms and boats," said Robert DiLella, a consultant to the Aruban Tourism Authority who launched [www.arubatruth.com](http://www.arubatruth.com) shortly after the investigation began. "Now they're being told 'That wasn't good enough, you didn't help and now you'll suffer for this.'"

Travel groups, while reporting little to no change in bookings to Aruba, expect any cancellations or loss of interest in trips to the island to be confined to Alabama.

"We have not booked very many trip to Aruba since all this started," said Clay Ingram, spokesman for AAA Alabama. "I'm sure to people living in Alabama, this is a lot closer to home. How it affects people in other states, I couldn't say."

But Steve Cape, a spokesman for Springdale Travel in Mobile, said his agency hasn't had any Aruba trip cancellations because of Riley's call for a boycott.

He's heard people joking that "you can get a good deal to Aruba," but he said rates haven't declined because of Riley's comments.

Cape said he doesn't think a boycott would help find the missing teenager.

"To be honest, I don't think it's going to really do anything," Cape said.

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