

China lifts blockade around plague-stricken town

August 9 2009



In this undated image made from video and released by China's Central China Television, CCTV via APTN on Wednesday, Aug. 5, 2009, a policewoman stands guard outside a hospital where patients are being treated for pneumonic plague in the town of Ziketan, in China's Qinghai province. Public buses were ordered off the roads of the remote Chinese town to control the possible spread of the highly infectious lung disease that has killed three people and seemed poised to claim a fourth victim Wednesday, Aug. 4, 2009, residents and authorities said. (AP Photo/CCTV via APTN)

(AP) -- A blockade around a remote northwest Chinese town where deadly pneumonic plague killed three people and sickened nine was lifted after no new infections were reported, an official said Sunday.

The blockade of Ziketan in an ethnically Tibetan area in Qinghai province ended Saturday night after 10 days, said a government

spokesman who would only give his surname, Wang.

Police had set up checkpoints around the farming town of 10,000 people, sealing it off to prevent the spread of the disease that can kill in as few as 24 hours if left untreated.

Wang said nine patients were recovering and in stable condition though they were required to stay for five days in a hospital for observation. Another 332 people quarantined for having "direct or indirect contact" with the patients were released.

The [outbreak](#), first detected July 30, killed three people who were neighbors. Most of the other sickened people were relatives of the first victim, a 32-year-old herdsman who became ill after burying his dog.

[China](#) has had previous cases of plague, a disease that circulates mainly among small animals like rats and mice but can also infect humans. Experts have said most cases in China's northwest occur when hunters are contaminated while skinning infected animals.

Pneumonic [plague](#) is the least common and most deadly form of the disease. It can be directly spread between humans since the [bacteria](#) is airborne and can easily be inhaled by those in close contact with infected patients. But if treated early with [antibiotics](#), it is curable.

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Citation: China lifts blockade around plague-stricken town (2009, August 9) retrieved 6 May 2024 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2009-08-china-blockade-plague-stricken-town.html>

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