

US Ebola labs, parts for clinic arrive in Liberia

September 30 2014, by Jonathan Paye-Layleh



An Medecins Sans Frontieres (MSF) employee walks past drying safety boots at MSF's Ebola isolation and treatment center, in Monrovia, Liberia, Monday Sept. 29, 2014. Six months into the world's worst-ever Ebola outbreak in West Africa authorities are desperately waiting for shipments of aid to help in the fight of this deadly disease. (AP Photo/Jerome Delay)

U.S. mobile Ebola labs should be up and running in Liberia this week, and American troops have broken ground for a field hospital, as the international community races to increase the ability to care for the

spiraling number of people infected with the dreaded disease.

Liberia is the hardest hit country in the largest ever Ebola outbreak, which has touched four other West African countries. More than 3,000 deaths have been linked to the disease across the region, according to the World Health Organization, in the largest outbreak ever.

But even that toll is likely an underestimate, partially because there aren't enough labs to test people for Ebola. WHO has warned that numbers for Liberia, in particular, have lagged behind reality because it takes so long to get test results back.

In addition, with too few doctors and nurses in the worst affected countries and not enough beds to isolate and treat the sick, the disease has whipped around communities, wiping out whole families.

The only way to stop its accelerating spread is to get sick people out of their homes and reduce the number of people they can infect. But the already weak health systems of Guinea, Liberia and Sierra Leone—where the vast majority of the cases have been—have collapsed under the pressure of the disease. Aid agencies and WHO have moved in to set up treatment centers, and now several countries have pledged to do the same.

Two mobile Ebola labs staffed by U.S. Naval researchers arrived this weekend and will be operational this week, the U.S. Embassy in Monrovia said in a statement Monday. The labs will reduce the amount of time it takes to learn if a patient has Ebola from several days to a few hours.

The U.S. military also delivered equipment to build a [field hospital](#), originally designed to treat troops in combat zones. The 25-bed clinic will be staffed by American health workers from the U.S. Public Health

Service and will treat doctors and nurses who have become infected.



Medecins Sans Frontieres (MSF) employees wearing protective gear receives an ambulance carrying suspected victims of the Ebola virus at MSF's Ebola isolation and treatment center in Monrovia, Liberia, Monday Sept. 29, 2014. Six months into the world's worst-ever Ebola outbreak in West Africa authorities are desperately waiting for shipments of aid to help in the fight against this deadly disease. (AP Photo/Jerome Delay)

Ebola is transmitted through contact with bodily fluids, so that places health care workers at high risk of infection. They have become sick at an alarming rate in this outbreak, WHO says, with 375 infected so far.

The U.S. is planning to build 17 other clinics in Liberia and will help to train more [health](#) workers to staff them. Britain has promised to help set up 700 more treatment beds in Sierra Leone, and its military will build

and staff a hospital in that country. France is sending field hospitals and doctors to Guinea.

But the needs remain enormous. The World Food Program said Tuesday it only has about 40 percent of the \$93 million it needs to deliver food to people who are struggling to feed themselves because their neighborhoods have been quarantined or they've lost the heads of their households. WHO says around 1,500 treatment beds have been built or are in the works, but that still leaves a gap of more than 2,100 beds. Between 1,000 and 2,000 international [health care workers](#) are needed.



Medecins Sans Frontieres (MSF) employees wearing protective gear walk past suspected victims of the Ebola virus in the triage section of MSF's Ebola isolation and treatment center in Monrovia, Liberia, Monday Sept. 29, 2014. Six months into the world's worst-ever Ebola outbreak in West Africa authorities are desperately waiting for shipments of aid to help in the fight of this deadly disease. (AP Photo/Jerome Delay)



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