

Obama to discuss Ebola response with top medical experts (Update)

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President Barack Obama will meet leading US medical experts next week as he considers how to follow through on his pledge to step up aid to Africa over the Ebola epidemic.

Obama will travel to the US headquarters of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) in Atlanta on Tuesday, after signaling he will deploy US military assets in the bid to check the spread of Ebola.

Obama will get "a briefing on the outbreak of the Ebola virus in West Africa, discuss the US response to that outbreak, and thank the scientists, doctors and health care workers who are helping those affected by the disease at home and around the world," said White House spokesman Josh Earnest.

Obama said in an NBC News interview on Sunday that the US military would help set up isolation units and equipment to help surge public health workers to West African nations affected by Ebola.

He said that, in its current form, he did not believe Ebola would reach the United States, but warned the virus could mutate and become a much greater threat to those outside Africa.

But since Obama's remarks on Sunday, the Pentagon has yet to unveil any major steps to address the epidemic, other than plans to send a 25-bed field hospital for health workers in Liberia.

The portable hospital has yet to be transported to Monrovia as "there are equipping, logistical training things that need to be done before that can be loaded onto transport aircraft and get down there," Pentagon spokesman Rear Admiral John Kirby told reporters.

"But we're committed to getting it down there."

His comments came amid criticism from some aid experts that the United States has moved too slowly and failed to deploy its vast military resources to fight the virus.

Kirby said there was a sense of urgency over Ebola, and the US military was part of a government-wide discussion on how to respond to the crisis.

"There are capabilities that the military possesses that might prove useful, in addition to this facility," he said.

After visiting the CDC, Obama will travel to Tampa, Florida, for a visit on Wednesday with military chiefs who run US Central Command, which will implement his new strategy to combat the Islamic State group in Syria and Iraq.

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