

# Obama to announce major Ebola effort

September 16 2014, by Stephen Collinson

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US President Barack Obama will Tuesday seek to "turn the tide" in the Ebola epidemic by ordering 3,000 US military personnel to West Africa and launching a major health care training and hygiene program.

The White House said Obama will travel to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention in Atlanta to meet US [health](#) chiefs and make the announcement, meant to spur a global effort to fight an outbreak that has already killed 2,400 people.

The announcement comes amid increasing alarm about the worst-ever outbreak of the disease which has spread through Liberia, Sierra Leone, Nigeria and the Democratic Republic of Congo.

Most of the new US effort will be concentrated in impoverished Liberia—the most badly affected nation.

Obama will announce that US Africa Command will set up a headquarters in Monrovia to act as a regional command and control center to coordinate US military and international relief programs. The effort will involve an estimated 3,000 American [military personnel](#), senior officials said. Many of the forces will be positioned at a staging base to expedite the transit of equipment and personnel.

## 500 health workers a week

US advisors will also train up to 500 [health care providers](#) per week in Liberia, in a bid to improve the direct medical care and the crippled

health infrastructure in the country.

In addition, Washington will send 65 public health service corps to Liberia to manage and staff a previously announced US military hospital to care for [health workers](#) who become sick with Ebola.

The United States will also, working in partnership with the United Nations Children's Fund, immediately send Ebola prevention kits, including disinfectant and advice to 400,000 of the most vulnerable families in Liberia.

"What is clear is in order to combat and contain the outbreak at its source, we need to partner and lead an international response," said one senior US official, on condition of anonymity.

## **Turn the tide**

The official said the Obama administration believes its latest emergency action could help "turn the tide" and slow the spread of the epidemic.

The White House however still believes that there is no realistic threat to the United States from the Ebola epidemic. It considers that any cases that do materialize on the US mainland among travelers, would be quickly isolated.

The United States has so far spent \$100 million on fighting the Ebola epidemic and the US Agency for International Development plans to allocate another \$75 million to increase the number of Ebola treatment units and protective gear for health providers.

In addition, the administration has asked Congress for a further \$88 million to fund the fight against Ebola in the coming months.

The money is contained in a short term bill to fund the government until mid-December which could pass Congress as soon as this week.

More than 100 CDC workers are already at work in West Africa, and many more staff are coordinating their work at the agency's Atlanta headquarters.

It was unclear how many of the new US government personnel being sent to West Africa would be deployed in direct contact with patients. The number however appears limited.

Obama first said last week that he was going to use a major military deployment to step up US efforts to fight the Ebola epidemic.

His remarks, and a recent YouTube message from the president offering guidance to the people of Africa on halting infections, highlight increasing White House concern about the national security and humanitarian implications of the rapid spread of the disease.

The Pentagon had already announced it would send a 25-bed field hospital Liberia.

The new effort will also see the United States construct 17 Ebola treatment centers with 100 beds in each.

Officials said meanwhile that the effort to train 500 health workers per week to meet the shortage in demand in affected nations would go on for at least six months.

The US effort is intended to control the epidemic at its source in West Africa, blunt the social and economic cost of the disease and to repair regional health infrastructure.

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