

WHO: Number of Ebola-linked cases passes 10,000 (Update)

October 25 2014, by Sarah Dilorenzo



In this photo taken on Tuesday, Oct. 21, 2014, a billboard reading 'Stop Ebola' on the Masiaka Highway, forming part of a trans-West African highway, which links all West African States, on the outskirts of the capital city of Conakry, Guinea. Despite stringent infection-control measures, the risk of Ebola's spread cannot be entirely eliminated, Doctors Without Borders said Friday, Oct. 24, 2014, after one of its doctors caught the dreaded disease while working in Guinea and went to New York City. (AP Photo/ Youssouf Bah)

More than 10,000 people have been infected with Ebola and nearly half of them have died, according to figures released Saturday by the World Health Organization, as the outbreak continues to spread.

The Ebola epidemic in West Africa is the largest ever outbreak of the disease with a rapidly rising death toll in Guinea, Liberia and Sierra Leone. There have also been cases in three other West African countries, Spain and the United States.

The U.N. health agency said Saturday that the number of confirmed, probable and suspected cases has risen to 10,141. Of those cases, 4,922 people have died. Its figures show about 200 new cases since the last report, four days ago.

Even those grisly tolls are likely an underestimate, WHO has warned, as many people in the hardest hit countries have been unable or too frightened to seek medical care. A shortage of labs capable of handling potentially infected blood samples has also made it difficult to track the outbreak. For example, the latest numbers show no change in Liberia's case toll, suggesting the numbers may be lagging behind reality.

On Thursday, authorities confirmed that the disease had spread to Mali, the sixth West African country affected, and on the same day a new case was confirmed in New York, in a doctor recently returned from Guinea.

Mali had long been considered highly vulnerable to the disease, since it shares a border with Guinea. The disease arrived there in a 2-year-old, who traveled from Guinea with her grandmother by bus and died Friday.



In this photo taken on Tuesday, Oct. 21, 2014, a health worker takes the temperature of a man, right, as part of the countries fight against the spread of the Ebola virus, on the Masiaka Highway, forming part of a trans-West African highway, which links all West African States, on the outskirts of the capital city of Conakry, Guinea. Despite stringent infection-control measures, the risk of Ebola's spread cannot be entirely eliminated, Doctors Without Borders said Friday, Oct. 24, 2014, after one of its doctors caught the dreaded disease while working in Guinea and went to New York City. (AP Photo/ Youssouf Bah)

The toddler, who was bleeding from her nose during the journey, may have had high-risk contact with many people, the World Health Organization warned. So far, 43 people are being monitored in isolation for signs of the disease, and WHO said Saturday that authorities are continuing to look for more people at risk.

To help fight Ebola, the U.N. humanitarian flight service airlifted about 1 ton of medical supplies to Mali late Friday. The seats of the plane were

removed to make room for the cargo, which included hazard suits for health workers, surgical gloves, face shields and buckets, according to the World Food Program, which runs the flights.

In Liberia, the country hardest hit by the epidemic, U.S. forces have been building desperately needed treatment centers and helping to bring in aid. On Saturday, Maj. Gen. Darryl Williams, who was in charge of the troops assigned to the Ebola response, handed power to Maj. Gen. Gary J. Volesky, the 101st Airborne commander.

"I've been told that by a number of people that the task we face is extremely hard. Well, a fairly famous person once said hard is not impossible," Volesky said. "Together, we're going to beat it."

Meanwhile, some in Ghana were worried that a strike by health care workers that began Friday could leave the country vulnerable to Ebola. Ghana does not border any country with reported cases, but it is serving as the headquarters for the U.N. mission on Ebola.

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