

Brazil troops battle Zika mosquitoes

February 13 2016, by Stan Lehman



An army soldier explain how to combat the *Aedes aegypti* mosquito that spreads the Zika virus, at the Central station, in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, Saturday, Feb. 13, 2016. More than 200,000 army, navy and air force troops are fanning out across Brazil to show people how to eliminate the *Aedes aegypti* mosquito that spreads the Zika virus, which many health officials believe is linked to severe birth defects. The nationwide offensive is part of President Dilma Rousseff's declared war on the virus that has quickly spread across the Americas.(AP Photo/Silvia Izquierdo)

More than 200,000 army, navy and air force troops fanned out across Brazil on Saturday to teach people how to eliminate the *Aedes aegypti* mosquito that spreads the Zika virus that many health officials believe is linked to severe birth defects.

The nationwide offensive is part of President Dilma Rousseff's declared war on the virus that has quickly spread across the Americas.

According to Brazil's government, about 220,000 members of the armed forces accompanied by community health agents and mosquito control teams were deployed Saturday to help educate the population on how to eliminate mosquito breeding areas in and around their homes. The teams were expected to visit 3 million homes in 350 cities to distribute explanatory pamphlets.

Wearing a white T-shirt printed with the campaign's "Zero Zika" slogan, Rousseff visited Rio de Janeiro's working class neighborhood of Zeppelin. She was accompanied by Mayor Eduardo Paes and Rio de Janeiro state governor Luiz Fernando Pezao.

The president visited three homes and chatted with residents about the importance of eliminating the breeding areas for the mosquito that also transmits dengue, chikungunya and yellow fever.

In one house, she sprayed insecticide in drains that could serve as mosquito breeding areas.



A woman reads a pamphlet distributed by navy sailors, in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, Saturday, Feb. 13, 2016. More than 200,000 army, navy and air force troops are fanning out across Brazil to show people how to eliminate the *Aedes aegypti* mosquito that spreads the Zika virus, which many health officials believe is linked to severe birth defects. The nationwide offensive is part of President Dilma Rousseff's declared war on the virus that has quickly spread across the Americas. (AP Photo/Silvia Izquierdo)

Rousseff said in brief comments to reporters that the Zika outbreak will not stop this year's Olympic Games from being held in Rio de Janeiro as scheduled, starting on Aug. 5.

To attract the attention of commuters at Rio's main train station, an army band played Michael Jackson's music while soldiers distributed flyers with information on eliminating [mosquito breeding](#) places.

"We must all understand that combating the mosquito is a priority," said

Brazilian Army spokesman Col. Gerson Freitas.



Navy sailors distribute pamphlets while explaining how to combat the *Aedes aegypti* mosquito that spreads the Zika virus, in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, Saturday, Feb. 13, 2016. More than 200,000 army, navy and air force troops are fanning out across Brazil to show people how to eliminate the *Aedes aegypti* mosquito that spreads the Zika virus, which many health officials believe is linked to severe birth defects. The nationwide offensive is part of President Dilma Rousseff's declared war on the virus that has quickly spread across the Americas. (AP Photo/Silvia Izquierdo)

The O Globo newspaper reported Saturday that troops participating in the Rio de Janeiro campaign are avoiding slums dominated by drug-trafficking gangs.

Outside Maracana Stadium, Japanese tourist Noko Sudrura said that she

put aside concerns about the Zika virus so she could experience Brazil's recent Carnival.

"So if I get sick, I will only have myself to blame," she laughed.



Army soldiers distribute pamphlets while explaining how to combat the *Aedes aegypti* mosquito that spreads the Zika virus, at the Central station, in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, Saturday, Feb. 13, 2016. More than 200,000 army, navy and air force troops are fanning out across Brazil to show people how to eliminate the *Aedes aegypti* mosquito that spreads the Zika virus, which many health officials believe is linked to severe birth defects. The nationwide offensive is part of President Dilma Rousseff's declared war on the virus that has quickly spread across the Americas. (AP Photo/Silvia Izquierdo)

The *Aedes aegypti* mosquito lives largely inside homes and can lay eggs in even a bottle-cap's worth of stagnant water. The dishes beneath potted

plants are a favorite spot, as are abandoned tires, bird feeders and even the little puddles of rainwater that collect in the folds of plastic tarps.

The Zika virus was first identified in Uganda in 1947 and subsequently spread to parts of Asia. Brazil recorded its first case in mid-2015. Researchers don't know how the virus made the jump, but two theories suggest it may have arrived with tourists visiting the country for the 2014 World Cup soccer tournament or for an international canoeing competition the same year.

Thanks to *Aedes aegypti*, the disease quickly spread across Brazil and to more than 20 countries in the region, the Caribbean and beyond, leading the World Health Organization to declare an international emergency.



Army soldiers set a banner that reads in Portuguese "A mosquito is not stronger than a whole country" at the Central station, in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, Saturday, Feb. 13, 2016. More than 200,000 army, navy and air force troops are fanning

out across Brazil to show people how to eliminate the *Aedes aegypti* mosquito that spreads the Zika virus, which many health officials believe is linked to severe birth defects. The nationwide offensive is part of President Dilma Rousseff's declared war on the virus that has quickly spread across the Americas. (AP Photo/Silvia Izquierdo)

Zika's immediate effects are mild, consisting mostly of a moderate fever and a rash, and only a fifth of those afflicted notice any symptoms.

But Brazilian authorities also say they have detected a spike in cases of microcephaly, a condition that leaves infants with unusually small heads and can result in brain damage and numerous developmental and health problems. The link between Zika and microcephaly remains unproven.

Since October, 5,079 suspected cases of microcephaly have been reported, Brazil's Health Ministry said on Friday. Of those, 462 cases had been confirmed and 765 discarded. Of the confirmed cases, 41 have been connected to Zika.



A man reads a pamphlet with information on how to combat the *Aedes aegypti* mosquito that spreads the Zika virus at a bar, in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, Saturday, Feb. 13, 2016. More than 200,000 army, navy and air force troops are fanning out across Brazil to show people how to eliminate the *Aedes aegypti* mosquito that spreads the Zika virus, which many health officials believe is linked to severe birth defects. The nationwide offensive is part of President Dilma Rousseff's declared war on the virus that has quickly spread across the Americas. (AP Photo/Silvia Izquierdo)



A navy sailor explains to a woman how to combat the *Aedes aegypti* mosquito that spreads the Zika virus, next to a covered pool in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, Saturday, Feb. 13, 2016. More than 200,000 army, navy and air force troops are fanning out across Brazil to show people how to eliminate the *Aedes aegypti* mosquito that spreads the Zika virus, which many health officials believe is linked to severe birth defects. The nationwide offensive is part of President Dilma Rousseff's declared war on the virus that has quickly spread across the Americas. (AP Photo/Silvia Izquierdo)



Brazil's President Dilma Rousseff, right, leaves a house as the Rio de Janeiro's Governor Luiz Pezao looks on, during the launch of the Zero Zika national campaign against the *Aedes aegypti* mosquito, at the Zepelin shanty town in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, Saturday, Feb. 13, 2016. The nationwide offensive is part of President Dilma Rousseff's declared war on the virus that has quickly spread across the Americas. (AP Photo/Leo Correa)



A boy looks at a pamphlet that reads in Portuguese "One Mosquito is not stronger than an entire country," during the launch of the national campaign against the *Aedes aegypti* mosquito at the Zepelin shanty town in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, Saturday, Feb. 13, 2016. The government says 220,000 members of the armed forces accompanied by community health agents and mosquito control teams are taking part in Saturday's effort to educate the population on how to eliminate mosquito breeding areas in and around their homes. (AP Photo/Leo Correa)



Brazil's President Dilma Rousseff, right, poses for the photo with locals wearing T-shirts that read in Portuguese "Out Zika" during the launch of the Zero Zika national campaign against the *Aedes aegypti* mosquito at the Zepelin shanty town, in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, Saturday, Feb. 13, 2016. The nationwide offensive is part of President Dilma Rousseff's declared war on the virus that has quickly spread across the Americas. (AP Photo/Leo Correa)



Brazil's President Dilma Rousseff, center, and the Rio de Janeiro's Mayor Eduardo Paes, right, walk on the street of the Zepelin shanty town, as they attend the launch of the Zero Zika national campaign against the *Aedes aegypti* mosquito, in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, Saturday, Feb. 13, 2016. More than 200,000 army, navy and air force troops are fanning out across Brazil to show people how to eliminate the *Aedes aegypti* mosquito that spreads the Zika virus, which many health officials believe is linked to severe birth defects. (AP Photo/Leo Correa)

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