

Poland turning National Stadium into COVID-19 field hospital

October 19 2020, by Vanessa Gera



This Friday, May 18, 2012 file photo aerial view, made from an hot air balloon, shows the National Stadium, in Warsaw, Poland. Poland's government is transforming the National Stadium in Warsaw into a field hospital to handle the surging number of patients infecting with the coronavirus. A government spokesman said Monday, Oct. 19, 2020 that the stadium will have room for 500 patients and will be equipped with oxygen therapy for those who need it. (AP Photo/Czarek Sokolowski, File)

Poland's government is transforming the National Stadium in Warsaw into a field hospital to handle the surging number of people infected with the coronavirus, and expects it to be operational within days, officials said.

The government is also making preparations to create other temporary hospitals as Polish hospitals are filling up and threatening to turn into a major crisis.

"We assume that it will not be possible to stop the dynamics of the epidemic and that we will have to open more temporary hospitals," Mariusz Kaminski, the interior minister, said.

Michal Dworczyk, the head of Prime Minister Mateusz Morawiecki's office, said the hospital at the National Stadium will have 500 beds in the first stage, 50 of which will be for patients requiring intensive care. Eventually it should be able to take 1,000 patients. He said it would be operational in a matter of days.

"This is the first time we are doing something like this in Poland. It is a great challenge for us," Dworczyk said.

Also Monday, Jaroslaw Kaczynski, the leader of the conservative ruling party and deputy prime minister, went into voluntary quarantine after having contact with an infected person. He was showing no symptoms and working from home, the party spokesman said.



In this Friday, Dec. 16, 2011 file photo, a view of the National Stadium in Warsaw. Poland's government is transforming the National Stadium in Warsaw into a field hospital to handle the surging number of patients infecting with the coronavirus. A government spokesman said Monday, Oct. 19, 2020 that the stadium will have room for 500 patients and will be equipped with oxygen therapy for those who need it. (AP Photo/Czarek Sokolowski, File)

Defense Minister Mariusz Blaszczak said he was also going into quarantine after contact with an infected person but also said he was feeling well.

It was unclear how the government will manage to staff the hospital at the stadium given widespread reports of shortages of doctors and other medical officials across the country.

The stadium, with a seating capacity of over 58,500, was constructed to host matches for the Euro 2012 football championship, which Poland co-hosted with Ukraine.

Poland experienced very low rates of infection in the spring compared with Western European countries but is now witnessing an exponential surge of coronavirus infections.

On Monday the Health Ministry recorded 7,482 new coronavirus infections over the previous day, and 41 deaths. Since the start of the pandemic the nation of 38 million has recorded 183,248 cases and 3,614 deaths. However, the true rate of infection is likely higher.

In the past day, 36,000 COVID-19 tests were carried out, meaning that nearly 21 percent of all tests came back positive.

Health Minister Adam Niedzielski warned Monday that Poland could have 15,000 to 20,000 new cases daily if infection rates keep increasing at their current pace. He said his ministry is preparing for that scenario.

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