

Virology of Ebola

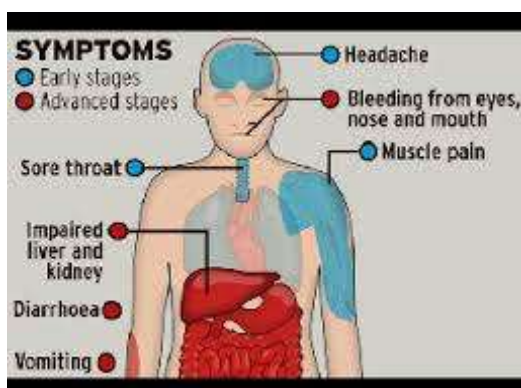
Ebola virus disease is caused by four of five viruses classified in the genus Ebolavirus, family Filoviridae, order Mononegavirales. The four disease-causing viruses are Bundibugyo virus, Sudan virus, Tai Forest virus, and one called simply, Ebola virus (formerly Zaire Ebola virus). Ebola virus is the most dangerous of the known Ebola disease-causing viruses, as well as being responsible for the largest number of outbreaks. The strain of virus affecting people in the current outbreak is a member of the Ebolus virus (Zaire) lineage. An article published in the New England Journal of Medicine on-line in April 2014 asserted that while the Ebola virus in Guinea shared 97% of its genetic code with the Zaire lineage, it was of a different clade than the strains from outbreaks in the Democratic Republic of Congo and Gabon, and constituted a new strain indigenous to Guinea, and was not imported from Central Africa to West Africa. This result, however was contradicted by two subsequent reports.

The first of these reports reached the conclusion that the outbreak "is likely caused by a Zaire ebolavirus (Ebola virus) lineage that has spread from Central Africa into Guinea and West Africa in recent decades, and does not represent the emergence of a divergent and endemic virus."

A second report published in June 2014 also supports the latter view, determining that it was "extremely unlikely that this virus falls outside the genetic diversity of the Zaire lineage" and that their analysis "unambiguously supports Guinea 2014 EBOV as a member of the Zaire lineage."

Scientists from the Broad Institute and Harvard University, in partnership with the Sierra Leone Ministry of Health and Sanitation, may have uncovered clues that set this Ebola outbreak apart from previous outbreaks.

For this study, 99 Ebola virus genomes were collected and sequenced from 78 patients diagnosed with the Ebola virus during the first 24 days of the outbreak in Sierra Leone. The



team found more than 300 genetic changes that make the 2014 Ebola virus distinct from previous outbreaks. It is still unclear whether these differences are related to the severity of the current outbreak. Five members of the research team became ill and died from Ebola before the study was published in August.

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US Open Tennis 2014

The 2014 US Open was a tennis tournament played on outdoor hard courts. It was the 134th edition of the US Open, the fourth and final Grand Slam event of the year. It took place at the USTA Billie Jean King National Tennis Center.

The tournament was an event run by the International Tennis Federation (ITF) and was part of the 2014 ATP World Tour and the 2014 WTA Tour calendars under the Grand Slam category. The tournament consisted of both men's and women's singles and doubles draws as well as a mixed doubles event. There were singles and doubles events for both boys and girls (players under 18), which was part of the Grade A category of tournaments, and singles, doubles and quad events for men's and women's wheelchair tennis players as part of the NEC tour under the Grand Slam category. Rafael Nadal was the defending champion in the men's event; however, on 18 August, the Spaniard announced his withdrawal from the event after failing to recover from a wrist injury, while Serena Williams is the two-time defending champion in the women's event.

In the men's singles competition, Marin Cilic won his maiden grand slam title; however, Serena Williams won her Open era record tying sixth title in the women's singles competition tying Chris Evert, and it was her eighteenth grand slam title tying Evert and Martina Navratilova. Winning the men's doubles, Bob Bryan and Mike Bryan became the most victorious doubles team in Open era history at the tournament, and this was the teams 100th title together and sixteenth grand slam title tying Todd Woodbridge for the Open era record. Ekaterina Makarova and Elena Vesnina won women's doubles competition title, becoming two-time grand slam champions with their victory at the 2013 French Open. The winning mixed doubles team was Sania Mirza and Bruno Soares, and for Mirza it was her third mixed doubles grand slam title in her career and Soares' second grand slam title for his career. It was Soares' second US Open title in mixed doubles, and it was the first for Mirza.

Winners

Seniors

Men's Singles

Croatia Marin Cilic def. Japan Kei Nishikori, 6–3, 6–3, 6–3

Marin Cilic claimed his first Grand Slam title, defeating Kei Nishikori, also playing in his first Grand Slam final.



Both players defeated Novak Djokovic and Roger Federer in their respective semi-finals



Serena Williams was the two-time defending champion and successfully defended her title, defeating Caroline Wozniacki in the final, 6–3, 6–3. Williams did not lose a set in the entire tournament and did not lose more than three games in any set. This was Williams' 18th Grand Slam (tennis) singles title, tying the number won by Martina Navratilova and Chris Evert. With the victory, Serena tied the open era record of six US Open titles held by Evert. This was Williams' third US Open championship that she competed in without losing a set, also tying Evert.

This tournament was the Grand Slam debut of Cici Bellis, who became the youngest player to win a match at the US Open since 1996 (and the youngest American to do so since 1986) when she defeated the twelfth seed Dominika Cibulkova in the first round at just the age of 15.

Men's Doubles

United States Bob Bryan / United States Mike Bryan def. Spain Marcel Granollers / Spain Marc López 6–4, 6–3



Women's Doubles

Russia Ekaterina Makarova / Russia Elena Vesnina def. Switzerland Martina Hingis / Italy Flavia Pennetta, 2–6, 6–3, 6–2



Mixed Doubles

India **Sania Mirza** / Brazil Bruno Soares def. United States Abigail Spears / Mexico Santiago González, 6–1, 2–6, [11–9]



Andrea Hlaváčková and Max Mirnyi were the defending champions, but chose not to participate together. Hlaváčková played alongside Alexander Peya, but lost in the second round to Taylor Townsend and Donald Young. Mirnyi teamed up with Chan Hao-ching, but lost in the second round to Ashleigh Barty and John Peers. Sania Mirza and Bruno Soares won the title, defeating Abigail Spears and Santiago González 6–1, 2–6, [11–9] in the final.

Juniors

Boys' Singles

Australia Omar Jasika def. France Quentin Halys, 2–6, 7–5, 6–1



Omar Jasika (born 18 May 1997) is an Australian tennis player. Jasika is the current holder of the US Open boys' singles defeating Quentin Halys 2–6, 7–5, 6–1 in the final.

Girls' Singles

Czech Republic Marie Bouzková def. Ukraine Anhelina Kalinina, 6–4, 7–6(7–5)



NATO leaders say Russia should face more sanctions

NATO leaders have agreed that Russia should face increased sanctions for its actions in eastern Ukraine. US President Barack Obama, British Prime Minister David Cameron, French President Francois Hollande, German Chancellor Angela Merkel and Italian Prime Minister Matteo Renzi sat down with Ukrainian President Petro Poroshenko on the fringes of a summit in Wales today.

A White House statement said the leaders reiterated their condemnation of Russia's continued flagrant violation of Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity.

It said they had agreed on the need for Russia to face increased costs for its actions.

NATO Secretary General Anders Fogh Rasmussen told the Kremlin to pull back Russian troops from Ukraine and to stop supporting rebels in eastern Ukraine.

"We call on Russia to end its illegal and self-declared annexation of Crimea," Mr Rasmussen said after a meeting with Mr Poroshenko at the NATO summit.

"We call on Russia to pull back its troops from Ukraine and to stop the flow of arms, fighters and funds to the separatists.

"We call on Russia to step back from confrontation and take the path of peace."

It was up to individual NATO members to decide whether to supply arms to Ukraine, Mr Rasmussen said.

"NATO as an alliance is not involved in delivery of equipment because we do not possess military capabilities," he said.

Meanwhile, President Poroshenko said a ceasefire plan aimed at ending a near five-month conflict in the east of the country would be signed tomorrow.

"Tomorrow in Minsk a document will be signed providing for the gradual introduction of the Ukrainian peace plan," he said.

Representatives of Kiev, Moscow, the separatist rebels and the pan-European security group the OSCE are due to meet in the Belarussian capital tomorrow.

However, Russia has several thousand combat troops and hundreds of tanks and armoured vehicles inside Ukraine, a NATO military officer has said.

NATO had previously said that "well over 1,000" Russian troops were operating inside Ukraine, marking a significant escalation of Moscow's military involvement in the country.

"We are still seeing several thousand Russian combat troops on the ground inside Ukraine, equipped with hundreds of tanks and armoured vehicles, so [there is] no substantial change in the disposition of Russian forces inside Ukraine," said the NATO officer, speaking on condition of anonymity.

Russian forces deployed near Ukraine's eastern border are "more lethal" than before and heavily armed with artillery and air defense weaponry, the Pentagon said today.

"The force that we see arrayed on the border is exceptionally capable, probably more capable, more lethal than anything that we've seen up until now," spokesman Colonel Steven Warren told reporters, saying there were more than 10,000 Russian troops in place.

Russia's foreign minister said Ukraine's drive to join NATO risks derailing progress made towards reaching a ceasefire and peace deal to end the conflict in the east of the country.

"This is an obvious attempt to derail efforts to start a dialogue on ensuring national security." He added that Russia hoped that Kiev and the rebels would take on board a seven-point peace plan suggested by President Vladimir Putin when they meet tomorrow for talks in Minsk.

Iran convicts Ahmadinejad's vice president

Mohammad Reza Rahimi, Iran's first vice president under former president Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, has been sentenced to prison and fined. Judge says Mohammad Reza Rahimi, an official under ex-president, has been jailed and fined, but does not reveal charges.

"I cannot reveal the details because the sentence is not final, but it includes a term of imprisonment and a fine," Gholamhossein Mohseni-Ejeie, the second-ranking member of Iran's judiciary told on September 8, 2014.



Iranian media previously reported that Rahimi, 65, was on trial for corruption. Appointed by Ahmadinejad after a controversial election win in 2009, Rahimi would be the most senior official from that era to be convicted. Politicians had accused him of heading up an embezzlement scheme. He was questioned by judicial officials before being placed on bail in December 2013. In March, local Iranian media reported Rahimi had been indicted, though details of the charges were unclear. Rahimi has said he is innocent.

According to Iranian law, the sentence must be confirmed by the Court of Appeal before it becomes final. The media does not have the right to reveal details of the conviction until that time.

Philippine House rejects President Benigno Aquino impeachment

The Philippine House of Representatives' justice committee today rejected three impeachment complaints against President Benigno Aquino III, killing the challenges. The committee, dominated by Aquino allies, voted 54-4 against each of the complaints, declaring them insufficient in substance. The complaints were filed by mostly left-wing activists and sponsored by the House's left-wing bloc.



They charged Aquino of culpable violation of the constitution, betrayal of public trust and corruption. The complaints cited Aquino's implementation of a major economic stimulus program declared partly unconstitutional by the Supreme Court and a defence cooperation agreement that gives American troops greater access to bases across the Philippines. Aquino has denied any wrongdoing.

The son of pro-democracy icons, Aquino won the presidency by a wide margin in 2010 on a promise to rid his nation of corruption and widespread poverty. "Mr. Chair, this is really a terrible day for accountability, a terrible day for the congressional power over the purse, a terrible day for the Filipino people," said Rep. Neri Colmenares, one of the sponsors of the complaints, addressing Rep. Neil Tupas, the committee chairman.

About a dozen youths who raised protest banners and chanted "Oust Noynoy!" had to be forcibly evicted from the room by security personnel. Noynoy is Aquino's nickname.

Juncker Commission

The Juncker Commission is the European Commission that will be in office from November 2014 and is due to serve until 2019. Its president is Jean-Claude Juncker, who presides over 27 other commissioners (one from each of the states composing the European Union, aside from Luxembourg, which is Juncker's state). In July 2014 Juncker was officially elected to succeed José Manuel Barroso, who had been re-elected by the European Parliament for a further five years from 2009 until 2014.

In the 2014 parliamentary election Juncker campaigned as the candidate of the European People's Party (EPP) for the presidency of the European Commission. The EPP won a plurality in parliament, and on 27 June, the European Council nominated him for the post. Later, on 15 July 2014, the European Parliament elected Juncker, and he is due to succeed Barroso in November.

Juncker has outlined a ten-point agenda for his Presidency focusing on jobs and growth.



MH17 crash: Dutch experts say numerous objects hit plane

Dutch experts say Malaysia Airlines flight MH17 broke up in mid-air after being hit by "objects" that "pierced the plane at high velocity" in July. The new report also said there was "no evidence of technical or human error".

Correspondents say this matches claims that MH17 was hit by missile shrapnel. Investigators relied on cockpit data, air traffic control and images, as the crash site in eastern Ukraine remains too dangerous to access amid fighting between government troops and rebels. The plane was flying from Amsterdam to Kuala Lumpur when it crashed in rebel-held territory in eastern Ukraine.

All 298 people on board, most of them from the Netherlands, died when the plane came down, amid reports it was shot down by pro-Russian rebels.



Both sides in this conflict use the same weapon, reports the BBC's transport correspondent Richard Westcott, and to find out who was responsible investigators would need to determine where the missile was launched.

One expert said they should eventually be able to work that out with a combination of radar data and evidence from the scene, our correspondent reports.

A sobering fact highlighted in this report was that three other, very large commercial airliners flew over the same area at around the same time, he adds.

The report from Dutch experts says the plane "broke up in the air probably as the result of structural damage caused by a large number of high-velocity objects that penetrated the aircraft from outside".

The investigators have not visited the crash site because of fighting in the area but they said photographic evidence of the wreckage suggests the plane split into pieces during "an in-flight break up".

Satellite image of MH17 debris site

Maintenance history showed the aircraft was airworthy and had no known technical problems when it took off from Amsterdam, the report added.

Experts said it was manned by "a qualified and experienced crew" and that engines were running normally at a speed of 915km/h (567mph) at 33,000ft (cruise altitude).

Radio communications between the pilot and Ukrainian air traffic control confirm that no emergency call was made.

Final transmissions from MH17

At 13:08:00 MH17 contacts Ukraine's Dnipropetrovsk International Airport (DNP): MH17 to DNP: Dnipro Radar, Malaysian one seven, flight level 330

DNP to MH17: Malaysian one seven, Dnipro Radar, good day, radar contact

Flight MH17's last transmission was at 13:19:56 when it responded to a navigation request from DNP:

DNP to MH17: Malaysian one seven, due traffic proceed direct to point Romeo November Delta

MH17 to DNP: Romeo November Delta, Malaysian one seven

At 13:20:00, DNP sends MH17 another radar message but there is no response:

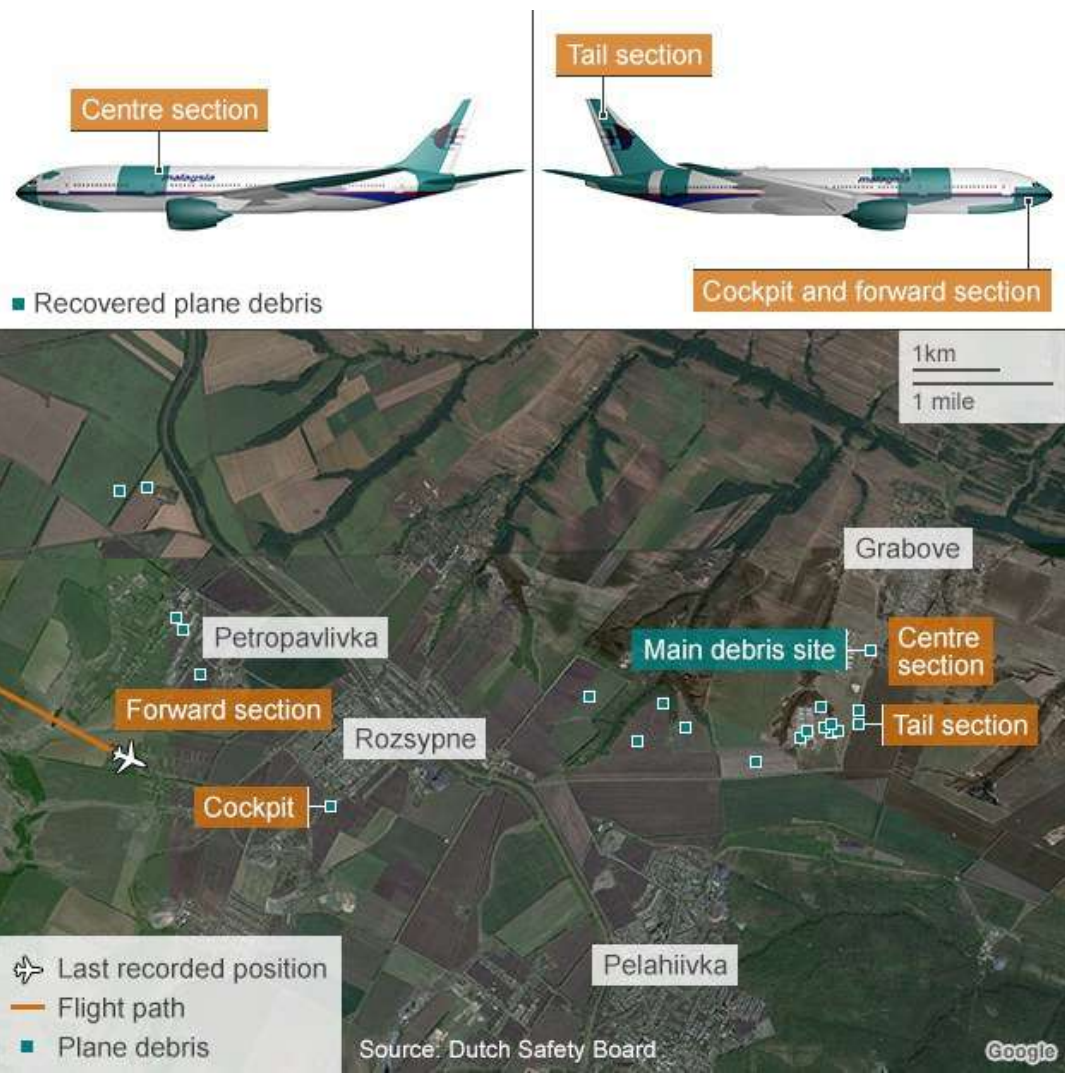
DNP to MH17: Malaysian one seven, how do you read me? Malaysian one seven, Dnipro Radar

DNP makes two more requests for contact from MH17 before Russia's Rostov airport (RST) calls in at 13:22:05.

RST to DNP: Listening [to] you, its Rostov

DNP to RST: Rostov, do you observe the Malaysian by... by the response?

RST to DNP: No, it seems that its target started falling apart.



Criminal investigation

While it is not the final report into the crash, the findings are significant because they are the first official account of what happened, says the BBC's Anna Holligan in the Netherlands.

A separate criminal investigation is being conducted by prosecutors in The Hague, she adds.

Barry Sweeney, whose son Liam died on board flight MH17, told it was "comforting... to know that nobody suffered" given the speed of the plane's break-up.

"It doesn't really matter who's done it, because they're still dead. If we find out, so be it. Unfortunately we can't do anything about it and we've just got to move on," he said.

Samira Calehr, a Dutch mother who lost two sons in the crash, told AP she wanted those responsible brought to justice "as soon as possible".

"I want to know who killed my children," she said.

Malaysian Prime Minister Najib Razak welcomed the report, saying it "leads to the strong suspicion that a surface-to-air missile brought MH17 down".

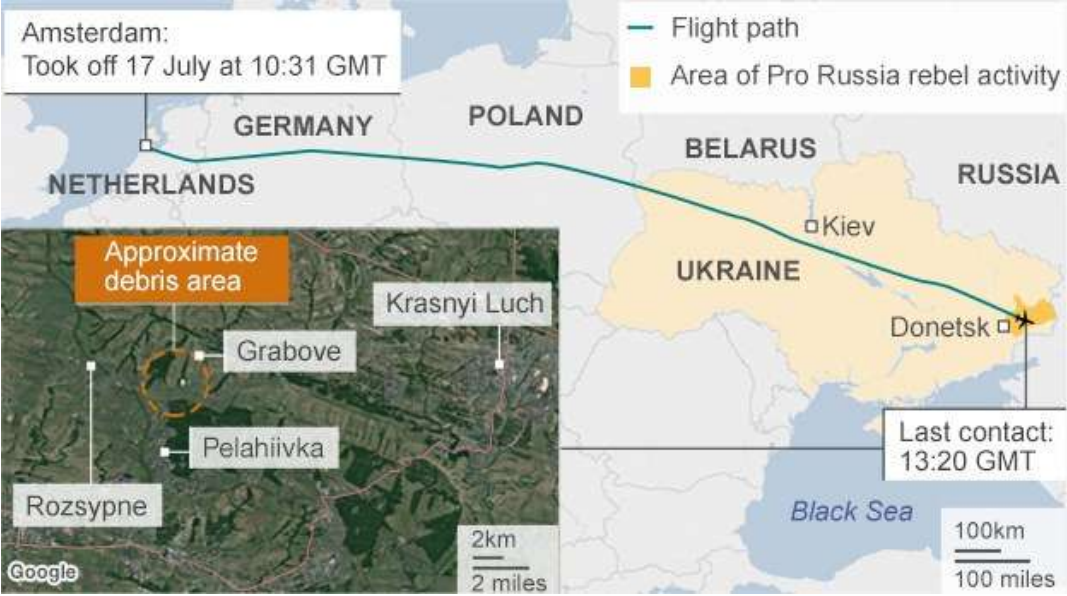
The rebel leader of the self-proclaimed Donetsk People's Republic, Aleksandr Zakharchenko, told the Russian Interfax news agency that the separatists did not have the capability to shoot down the plane.

Ukraine's government and several Western leaders say there is strong evidence that pro-Russian separatists shot down the plane with an anti-aircraft system known as Buk.

Russia has consistently denied allegations that it had supplied any missiles or weapons to the rebels.

The search for evidence has been hampered by heavy fighting in the region, and Malaysian Transport Minister Liow Tiong Lai called on both sides to grant investigators full access.

More than 2,600 people have been killed and thousands more wounded since violence between rebels and Ukrainian government forces erupted in April.



Key findings of report

- Likely that damage resulted in loss of structural integrity of aircraft, leading to break-up in the air
- Forward parts of plane found near Petropavlivka closest to last flight data broadcast
- Cockpit window contained numerous small puncture holes suggesting small objects entered from above level of cockpit floor
- Damage to forward section indicates plane penetrated by large number of high-velocity objects from outside
- No evidence found of manipulation of flight and data recorders
- No indication of technical or operational issues with plane or crew

General Mills buying Annie's for \$46 a share

General Mills announced on Monday that it will acquire organic food producer Annie's for about \$820 million—in an attempt to boost its presence in the natural food space.

Annie's shares spiked more than 37 percent in extended-hours trading after the announcement. General Mills shares were unchanged.



General Mills will pay \$46 a share in cash to acquire the company. Annie's said the transaction consideration represents a 51 percent premium over Annie's 30-day average closing price of \$30.47 as of September 5, 2014

The deal, which is expected to finalize later this year, is expected to reflected in General Mills' earnings within the first 12 months after its completion. General Mills plans to fund the acquisition through available credit.

"This acquisition will significantly expand our presence in the U.S. branded organic and natural foods industry, where sales have been growing at a 12 percent compound rate over the last 10 years," said Jeff Harmening, General Mills executive vice president and chief operating officer.

"Annie's competes in a number of attractive food categories, with particular strength in convenient meals and snacks—two of General Mills' priority platforms"

Best known for its the rabbit-shaped mac and cheese, Annie's reported \$204 million in net sales during its latest fiscal year, up about 20 percent from a year earlier.

The Berkeley, Calif.-based company markets nearly 150 products and has more than 35,000 retail locations in the U.S and Canada.

Annie's said "partnering with a company of General Mills' scale and resources" will maximize value for stockholders and help it to expand into new channels and product lines.

MICHAEL SCHUMACHER HEADS HOME FROM HOSPITAL

Former Formula One champion Michael Schumacher has left a Swiss hospital and will continue his recovery at home, his manager said on Sept. 9. The seven-time F1 champion suffered a serious head injury while skiing in France at the end of December.

"Considering the severe injuries he suffered, progress has been made in the past weeks and months," his manager, Sabine Kehm, said in a statement. "There is still, however, a long and difficult road ahead."



Schumacher was transferred to a hospital in Lausanne in June, after six months at a hospital in France. Kehm said he was now at his home in Gland, near Geneva, without specifying when the move happened or giving details about his current condition.

"We ask that the privacy of Michael's family continue to be respected, and that speculations about his state of health are avoided," Kehm said.

Schumacher's accident happened on a family vacation as he was skiing with his 14-year-old son

at the Meribel ski resort in the French Alps.

The avid skier hit the right side of his head on a rock, cracking his helmet. Doctors operated to remove blood clots from his brain, but some were left because they were too deeply embedded. Schumacher's condition stabilized after he was placed in a drug-induced coma, from which he has since emerged.

China's Latest Food-Safety Scare Comes From Taiwan

It's the Mid-Autumn Festival in China, a holiday that coincides with the full moon in the eighth month of the lunar calendar, and people across the country will be celebrating by going out in the evening and gazing at the sky. Tradition calls for admiring the moon's beauty while eating sweet round cakes loaded with egg yolks and lotus seeds, wrapped in a dough containing generous amounts of lard.



In the runup to this year's festival, though, yet another food scandal is giving Chinese reason to worry about the safety of those mooncakes. For a change, the center of the latest scandal isn't in mainland China but in Taiwan, where the government last week arrested six people for allegedly recycling oil from kitchens and grease from leather factories and selling the mixture to unwitting buyers.

That has led Chang Guann (1498:TT), a Taiwanese supplier of cooking oil, to remove from sale more than 236 tons of oil products, according to Taiwan's Food and Drug Administration. Nearly 1,000 shops or restaurants on the island had unknowingly purchased tainted lard. Another company hit by the scandal is Wei-Chuan Food (1201:TT), a Taipei producer of everything from ice cream to MSG that has told the Taiwan stock exchange it expects to lose 79.4 million Taiwan dollars (\$2.65 million) through product recalls and lost inventory. The company's stock price plunged nearly 7 percent on Monday.

The foul play in Taiwan provides a rare chance for the Chinese government, hit by scandal after scandal involving food safety, to indulge in some schadenfreude—or, to use the Chinese expression for taking pleasure in the misfortune of others, xin zai le huo. No doubt China's beleaguered food-safety mandarins, repeatedly criticized for lax regulation of the food supply on the mainland, welcome any opportunity to point out the shortcomings of a rival.

The case is the second major food-safety scandal by a Taiwan-based company in the past year, as the state-run China News Service helpfully reminded readers; the earlier incident prompted Wei-Chuan to recall "tens of thousands of bottles of tainted cooking oil." According to the official China Daily, the General Administration of Quality Supervision, Inspection, and Quarantine, the Chinese agency in charge of food safety, said it hadn't yet found any products on the mainland containing the recycled cooking oil. Still, the regulator has warned Chinese citizens against eating tainted food from Taiwan. In Hong Kong, meanwhile, the South China Morning Post reported today that the local government has said at least four importers had introduced the tainted oil into the city.

The new gutter-oil scandal has "shocked local consumers" in Taiwan who expect more from their government, according to a report by China's Xinhua news agency. "I hope the law could be revised to impose tougher punishment on those who breach food safety regulations," one New Taipei resident told the news agency.

Is the PA stalling Gaza war crimes probe?

The Palestinian Authority has so far prevented the launch of a formal investigation into the alleged war crimes committed by Israel and Palestinian factions during the 50-day Gaza war last July and August, according to officials at the International Criminal Court.

In a confidential letter obtained exclusively, ICC's top prosecutor Fatou Bensouda says she "did not receive a positive confirmation" from PA Foreign Minister Riad Malki that the request, submitted by the Palestinian justice minister for an international investigation, had the Palestinian government's approval. Both the PA and Hamas have publicly called for an investigation by the ICC into the alleged war crimes.

On July 25, PA Justice Minister Saleem al-Saqqah and Palestinian General Prosecutor Ismaeil Jabr submitted a letter to the ICC via a French law firm calling for an investigation. However, according to ICC regulations, "Only the Head of State, Head of Government and Minister of Foreign Affairs" can grant the international body jurisdiction to investigate.

Twelve days later, FM Malki travelled to The Hague to meet with top ICC officials: "We must do everything within our power to enable the International Criminal Court to bring to justice those responsible for committing war crimes," Malki said.

The document obtained by Al Jazeera is in line with an article written by Bensouda in The Guardian on August 29, where the ICC prosecutor states that the Palestinian leadership has not granted her office jurisdiction to investigate alleged war crimes in its territory.

But according to Geoffrey Nice, who served as a prosecutor for seven years in The Hague, "This document shows that the Palestinian Authority either never authorised the original referral when it was brought on the 25th July by the Minister of Justice and the general Prosecutor, or that their decision has changed, or their decision has been changed for them or under pressure from someone else."

Palestinian Ambassador to the UN, Riad Mansour, said there was a consensus among the among the Palestinian people and the political groups about joining the ICC.

"The decision as to when that step will be taken by President Mahmoud Abbas and top Palestinian leadership is left for them," he told Al Jazeera.

"I think people should give the Palestinian leadership the courtesy of selecting the appropriate time in doing so."

United States officials have in the past convinced the PA leadership to refrain from "pursuing ... international legal forums" during negotiations with the Israelis, especially after the United Nations special investigation into the 2008-2009 war in Gaza, the "Goldstone Report", accused Israel of committing war crimes.

But since US-backed negotiations broke down earlier this year, Palestinian leaders have signed a number of international treaties and were encouraged to turn to the ICC to prosecute Israel.

After the recent war in Gaza, in which over 2,100 Palestinians, mostly civilians, and 70 Israelis, mostly soldiers, were killed, both PA and Hamas officials agreed to ask the ICC to launch a formal investigation into alleged war crimes committed by both sides during the conflict.

But on September 10, Israel announced that it would launch its own independent investigation into two major attacks committed during the war, one in which a UN school was bombed by Israeli forces, which critics claim is a bid to fend off international scrutiny.

According to international law expert Rodney Dixon, "[A]n ICC investigation could be delayed" as the ICC prosecutor's attention is shifted from possibly launching an investigation to "whether an investigation by Israel is genuine, and covers the same persons and conduct of any potential ICC investigation".

Floods in J&K

In September 2014, due to torrential monsoon rains, the Kashmir region was hit by heavy floods. The regions of Jammu and Kashmir in India and Azad Kashmir, Gilgit-Baltistan and Punjab in Pakistan were affected by these floods. As of 7 September 2014 nearly 200 people in India and 205 people in Pakistan have died as a result of the floods. According to Home Ministry of India, several thousand villages across the state have been hit and 350 villages are submerged. So far 47,200 people have been rescued, which includes 24,000 from Srinagar city. Many parts of Srinagar, including the Army cantonment in Badamibagh, were inundated, and vital roads submerged, by the floods.



The death toll as of September 10 has crossed 190 in Kashmir valley and 2600 villages were reported to be affected in Jammu and Kashmir, out of which 390 village of Kashmir are completely submerged. 1225 villages are partially affected and 1000 villages are affected in Jammu Division. The cause of the flood is continuous heavy rainfall due to which local rivers broke out into the streets. The areas affected by the flood are mostly districts in south Kashmir which include Anantnag, Pulwama, Baramulla, Sopore. Jhelum flows above danger mark in these areas. The discharge rate in the river was recorded as 70000 m³/s against the normal discharge of 25000 m³/s. At least 200 deaths recorded.



As of September 8, in many of Srinagar's neighborhoods, the water was about 12 feet (3.7 m) deep, submerging entire houses. Stranded residents left their homes to move in with friends or relatives in safer areas.



Rescue Operations in India

Home Secretary of India Anil Goswami said 23 aircraft, 29 helicopters, 205 columns of Indian Army and 244 boats were on the rescue job. According to home secretary, 10 VSAT systems are being air lifted to restore critical telecom towers and a satellite link from Bardula has been provided for crucial communication. Two IL 76 and one AN 32 aircraft carried a total of 50 tonnes of supplies including food, water and medicines. 150 boats were dispatched to South Kashmir for excavation of people from submerged areas. Armed Forces and National Disaster Response Force (NDRF) so far rescued 47,200 persons in different regions of Jammu and Kashmir. Bharat Sanchar Nigam Limited (BSNL) has launched an operation on a war-footing with Indian Army and Indian Air Force (IAF) to restore mobile services through satellite network and the telecom network.



Home Ministry has been set to Srinagar to monitor rescue operations. The government has also set up a control room in Delhi and has asked people to approach it with details of their trapped families.



Prime Minister of India, Narendra Modi offered an assistance of INR1000 crore (US\$170 million) to the state government, this was in addition to INR1100 crore (US\$180 million) already earmarked for the disaster. Terming it as a "national disaster", Modi also took an aerial survey of the affected areas and even offered help those affected in the Pakistan-occupied Kashmir (PoK).



Chief Minister of Maharashtra announced an aid of INR10 crore (US\$1.7 million) from the chief minister's relief fund for the rescue and relief for Jammu and Kashmir flood victims. Also, Madhya Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, Gujarat and Andhra Pradesh, announced an assistance of INRS crore (US\$830,000) each and appealed to the people to come forward and help those in need.

Origin of floods

The Jammu and Kashmir state and adjoining areas received heavy rainfall from 2 September 2014 onwards, during last stage of monsoon in India.



This influenced triggered flooding and landslides in Indian as well as adjoining areas of Pakistan. On 5 September, the Jhelum River in Srinagar was reported to flow at 22.40 feet (6.83 m) which is 4.40 feet (1.34 m) above the danger mark and at 33 feet (10 m) at Sangam in Anantnag district which is 12 feet (3.7 m) above the danger mark. The Chenab River was also reported to flow above the danger mark by which hundreds of villages were affected in Pakistan. The torrential rains affected various districts of Qadirabad, Sialkot, Narowal, Gujrat, Mandi Bahauddin, Gujranwala, Hafizabad, Sheikhupura of central Punjab in Pakistan.

Reasons

Climate change may have caused Kashmir floods

The devastating floods in Jammu and Kashmir could be a manifestation of extreme weather events induced by climate change, the Centre for Science and Environment said. Flood-affected people row boats past partially submerged buildings in floodwaters in Srinagar, India, Tuesday, Sept. 9, 2014. The flooding began earlier this month in Kashmir, where it has caused landslides and submerged much of the main city of Srinagar, on the Indian-administered side. The death toll from the flooding in both countries has climbed to at least 457. unita Narain, director general of CSE, said the calamities in Mumbai (2005), Leh (2010), Uttarakhand (2013) and now Jammu and Kashmir show a similar pattern of extreme rainfall, which can be a result of climate change. She said that as was the case with some of the previous extreme rainfall events, the scale of disaster in Jammu and Kashmir has been exacerbated by unplanned development, especially along the river banks. She said: "In the last 100 years, more than 50 percent of lakes, ponds and wetlands of Srinagar have been encroached upon for constructing buildings and roads. The banks of the Jhelum river have been taken over in a similar manner, vastly reducing the river's drainage capacity." CSE deputy general director Chandra Bhusan said Jammu and Kashmir is not prepared to handle extreme rainfall events. "Jammu and Kashmir does not have a flood forecasting system. Its disaster management system is also rudimentary," he said. Narain said that according to the latest analysis by the Working Group II of the IPCC (Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change) assessment report (AR5), floods and droughts are likely to increase in India. She added: "The IPCC's 2011 special report on managing the risks of extreme events and disasters to advance climate change adaptation presents projections for the period 2071-2100. It points to increasing incidents of more frequent and intense heavy precipitation over most regions." She exhorted the government to come out of its denial mode that climate change is not affecting us. "The government must discard its ostrich-like policy and get out of its denial mode. We will have to see the linkages between climate change and the events such as those unfolding in Jammu and Kashmir. We will have to accept that climate change is going to affect us more and more in the future. We will have to start preparing to adapt to the climate change," she said.

2010 Ladakh floods

The 2010 Ladakh floods occurred on 6 August 2010 across a large part of Ladakh, a region of the northernmost Indian state of Jammu and Kashmir. 71 towns and villages were damaged, including the main town in the area, Leh. At least 255 people are reported to have died, six of whom were foreign tourists, after a cloudburst and heavy overnight rains triggered flash floods, mudslides, and debris flows. 200 people were reported missing in the initial aftermath of the storm, and thousands more were rendered homeless after the flooding caused extensive damage to property and infrastructure. Overall, 9000 people were directly affected by the event. Leh city is the largest town in Ladakh region of Jammu and Kashmir. It is on a plateau at around 3500 meters above sea level and usually receives very little rainfall (around 100 mm/yr). Described as a 'high altitude cold desert', the area has sparse rainfall and a heavy downpour is a rare occurrence. The average rainfall in Leh for the month of August is 15.4 mm, with highest rainfall ever recorded during a single 24-hour period being 51.3 mm, recorded on 22 August 1933. The town is predominantly Buddhist and popular with tourists for its natural beauty. August is the peak tourist season when thousands of western backpackers flock the area. Leh receives about 60000 foreign and 150,000 domestic tourists annually. The flash floods happened after a night of heavy downpour. The cloudburst itself occurred between 0000–0030 hours IST on 6 August 2010, leading to flash flooding, debris flows, and mudslides over the region. The rainfall distribution was highly spatially variable. The most intense part of the storm was focused in a 6 km wide band parallel to, and a few kilometers from, the river Indus. This band was centred over most of the major settlements in the area, including Leh. Outside the band, the rainfall intensity was unremarkable; the only weather station in the area, at Leh airport, recorded only 12.8 mm of total rainfall for the night of 6 August. However, within it precipitation intensities were over an order of magnitude higher, peaking at at least 150 mm/h over Leh during the most intense part of the storm. Some estimates of the maximum total rainfall in some places were as high as 250 mm. Note that the implied 75 mm of rain over Leh during the most intense part of the storm is equivalent to around a year's worth of rain falling in 30 minutes. The rains occurred at night, and surprised everyone. In Leh, many buildings were destroyed including hospitals, the bus terminal, radio station transmitter, telephone exchange and mobile-phone towers.



Syria warns against foreign intervention

Following US decision to go after Islamic State group in Syria, minister says Damascus' approval is needed for action. A Syrian government minister has warned that any foreign intervention in the country would be an act of aggression unless it is approved by Damascus, after the United States said it was prepared to strike against Islamic State fighters in the country. Syria has repeatedly warned that any action on its soil needs its approval and has said it is willing to work with any country to tackle IS fighters who have captured large areas of Syria and neighbouring Iraq.



"Any action of any type without the approval of Syrian government is an aggression against Syria," Ali Haidar, minister of national reconciliation affairs, told reporters in Damascus on Thursday. "There must be cooperation with Syria and coordination with Syria and there must be a Syrian approval of any action whether it is military or not." Foreign countries could use the Islamic State threat simply as a pretext for attacking Syria, Haidar told reporters ahead of a meeting with new international peace mediator Staffan de Mistura. US President Barack Obama authorised late on Wednesday air strikes against Islamic State group targets inside Syria for the first time, pledging to destroy its fighters "wherever they exist". In an address to the nation, Obama also announced an expansion of strikes in Iraq, saying he would be dispatching nearly 500 more US troops to the country to assist its besieged security forces. Obama called on Congress to authorise a programme to train and arm rebels in Syria who are fighting both the Islamic State group and Syrian President Bashar al-Assad. Syria's main Western-backed opposition group welcomed Obama's decision, but while repeating its demand that Assad must go. "The Syrian Coalition ... stands ready and willing to partner with the international community not only to defeat ISIS [Islamic State] but also rid the Syrian people of the tyranny of the Assad regime," said Hadi al-Bahra, head of the coalition. Russia said unilateral US strikes in Syria would be a crude violation of international law. "The US president has directly announced the possibility of strikes by American armed forces against positions of the Islamic State in Syria without the consent of its legal government," said Alexander Lukashevich, a spokesman for the Russian foreign ministry. "In the absence of an appropriate decision of the UN Security Council, such a step would become an act of aggression, a crude violation of the norms of international law," he said. Also on Thursday, the foreign minister of Germany said his country would not be taking part in air strikes in Syria, while David Cameron's spokesman said the British prime minister was not ruling out military action against IS.

EU approves new sanctions against Russia

The European Union has agreed to introduce new sanctions against Russia targeting oil and defence firms, but could lift them if a Ukraine ceasefire holds, EU head Herman Van Rompuy said. A further 24 people including Russian oligarchs and Ukrainian separatists have been slapped with travel bans and asset freezes under the sanctions, which have been delayed for the past week by disagreements between EU countries. The sanctions come into force on Friday, Van Rompuy said in a statement on Thursday, after sharp differences over whether their introduction might undercut peace efforts and with Moscow promising a forceful response. Russia said it had already drawn up new anti-Western sanctions targeting imports of consumer goods and second-hand cars, the AFP news agency reported. Moscow and Western powers have imposed tit-for-tat sanctions against each other over Ukraine. NATO and its allies accuse Russia of backing rebels in the five-month conflict that the UN estimates has killed more than 2,700 people in five months. Van Rompuy said the EU could propose to "amend, suspend or repeal the set of sanctions in force, in all or in part," depending on the results of a "comprehensive review" of the ceasefire at the end of September. The 28 member states would then look at any such proposal "urgently", he said. "We have always stressed the reversibility and scalability of our restrictive measures," he said. The sanctions coming into effect on Friday are a toughening up of measures adopted in July after the shooting of Malaysia Airlines flight MH17 over rebel-held east Ukraine. Reacting to the new sanctions, Russia remained committed to help enforce the peace initiative in Ukraine, Interfax news agency said, citing a Kremlin spokesman. "Despite the EU position being non-constructive, Russia will continue to do its utmost to help enforce the existing peace plan, as well as to stabilise the situation in the south-east of Ukraine overall," Dmitry Peskov was quoted as saying. Under the latest round, the EU said three major Russian oil companies and three top defence companies would be barred from seeking debt financing from Europe. Striking at the energy industry, Russia's major export earner, EU companies will be barred from providing services for deep water and arctic oil exploration and production. EU nationals and companies are also barred from extending loans to the top five Russian state-owned banks. They will also no longer be able to trade in the banks' bonds, shares or financial instruments with maturities of more than 30 days, a significant step up from the previous 90 days which could make it even more difficult for companies to raise fresh financing. The move will likely make borrowing more expensive still for Russian companies, undermining an economy already in the doldrums. A ban on the export of dual-use goods and technology was extended. Twenty-four people including the rebel leadership in eastern Ukraine's Donbass region, the government in Russian-annexed Crimea, "as well as Russian decision-makers and oligarchs," were added to a list of individuals facing EU travel bans and asset freezes, it said. The full details of the sanctions and which companies and individuals are on the list will be available Friday when they are published in the EU's Official Journal, which gives them legal effect.

Houthi rebels in talks with Yemen government

Yemen's government and Shia Muslim Houthi rebels have resumed talks in a bid to end a crisis that has seen weeks of sometimes bloody protests in the capital. On September 11, 2014, a member of the government's negotiating team said both sides had signed an agreement that included a further reduction of fuel prices and the formation of a new government to end the crisis. But later in the day there was some confusion of the level progress in the negotiations. The Defence Ministry's website said a political breakthrough was "imminent" and one Houthi member was also optimistic about a breakthrough. But Mohammed Abdulsalam, a spokesman for the Houthis, said on his Facebook page: "We have not reached a final agreement or signed a deal and communications are continuing. Later, a member of the Houthis' political bureau, Abdel Malik al-Ijri, said without elaborating that the main issues had been agreed and "small issues" remained to be settled. A diplomatic source in Sanaa tempered optimism and said the two sides were far from agreement. "Nothing has been signed as of yet and nothing has been agreed to. There are ideas that are being thrown back and forth. "For political reasons, each side is trying to say the negotiations are ongoing. It's way of calming the nerves," the source told Reuters. The Houthis, who follow the small Zaidi branch of Shia Islam, have been embroiled in a decade-old conflict with the central government in Sunni-dominated Sanaa, fighting for more territory and control in the north. **Fuel subsidies** In the past weeks, they have capitalised on an unpopular decision by the government to reverse fuel subsidies to launch protests in the capital Sanaa. Houthi protesters have been blocking the main road to Sanaa's airport and holding sit-ins for weeks at ministries in an attempt to oust the government and restore fuel subsidies. On Tuesday, hundreds marched on the government headquarters, sparking clashes with police that left seven protesters and a paramedic dead. Witnesses said thousands of supporters of the rebels staged a sit-in north of the capital on Thursday to protest against the deaths and demand that their "murderers" be brought to justice. **Who are Huthis?** The Houthis are a Zaidi Shia insurgent group operating in Yemen. They have also been referred to as a "powerful clan," and by the title Believing Youth. The group takes its name from Hussein Badreddin al-Houthi, their former commander, who was reportedly killed by Yemeni army forces in September 2004. Several other commanders, including, Ali al-Qatwani, Abu Haider, Abbas Aidah and Yousuf al-Madani (a son-in-law of Hussein al-Houthi) have also been killed by Yemeni forces. The Houthi brothers' father Hussein Badreddin al-Houthi is said to be the spiritual leader of the group. The group has been in conflict with Salafi, Sunni and takfiri militants.



Membership of the group had between 1,000 and 3,000 fighters as of 2005 and between 2,000 and 10,000 fighters as of 2009. In the Yemen Post it was claimed, however, that they had over 100,000 fighters. According to Houthi Expert Ahmed Al-Bahri the Houthis had a total of 100,000-120,000 followers, including both armed fighters and unarmed loyalists. **Territorial control** Through their armed uprising, the Houthis have managed to gain control over all of Saada Governorate and parts of 'Amran Governorate, Al Jawf Governorate and Hajjah Governorate. By 9 November 2011, Houthis were said to be in control of two Yemeni governorates (Saada and Al Jawf) and close to taking over their third governorate (Hajjah), which would enable them to launch a direct assault on Yemeni capital Sana'a. By May 2012, it was reported that Houthis controlled a majority of Saada, Al Jawf and Hajjah governorates, had gained access to the Red Sea and had started erecting barricades north of the capital Sana'a in preparation for new conflict. **Ideology** Houthis belong to the Zaidi branch of Shia Islam, also known as Fivers, a sect of Islam almost exclusively present in Yemen. They are distinct from the Shi'ite majority, the Twelvers found in mainly in Iraq, Lebanon and Iran and are known for being most similar to Sunni Muslims in matters of religious law and rulings. They do however, believe in the concept of an Imamate as being essential to their religion, which makes them distinct from Sunnis. The Houthis have asserted that their actions are for the defence of their community from widespread and systematic discrimination, whereas the Yemeni government has in turn accused the insurgents of intending to overthrow the regime out of a desire to institute Zaidi Shia religious law, destabilising the government and stirring anti-American sentiment. The Houthis have told people they are "praying in the wrong way" by raising their arms, as is the custom among Sunnis in Yemen. The Yemeni government has also accused the Houthis of having ties to external backers, in particular the Iranian government, as Iran is a Shia-majority country. In turn, the Houthis have countered with allegations that the Yemeni government is being backed by virulently anti-Shia external backers such as al-Qaeda and the monarchy of Saudi Arabia, despite the fact that former President Ali Abdullah Saleh was also Zaidi.

Destruction of Brazilian Amazon spikes by almost a third

The rate of destruction blighting the world's largest rain forest spiked by nearly a third last year, according to new data released by the Brazilian government. Satellite data showed that 2,315 square miles of forest had been cleared from the Brazilian Amazon in the 12 months through July 2013, up 29 percent from the previous year. It reflects a reversal in the downward trend since 2009.

Despite the increased destruction in 2013, the Brazilian report showed that the area cleared is still the second-lowest annual figure since the government began tracking deforestation in 2004. In that year, almost 11,580 square miles of forest were lost.



Still, an estimated 17 percent of the Amazon has been lost in the last 50 years, mostly because of forest conversion for cattle ranching — a trend that has concerned environmentalists, given that it is home to an estimated quarter of all known land species. The Amazon also serves as a giant carbon sink, helping stabilize the planet's climate.



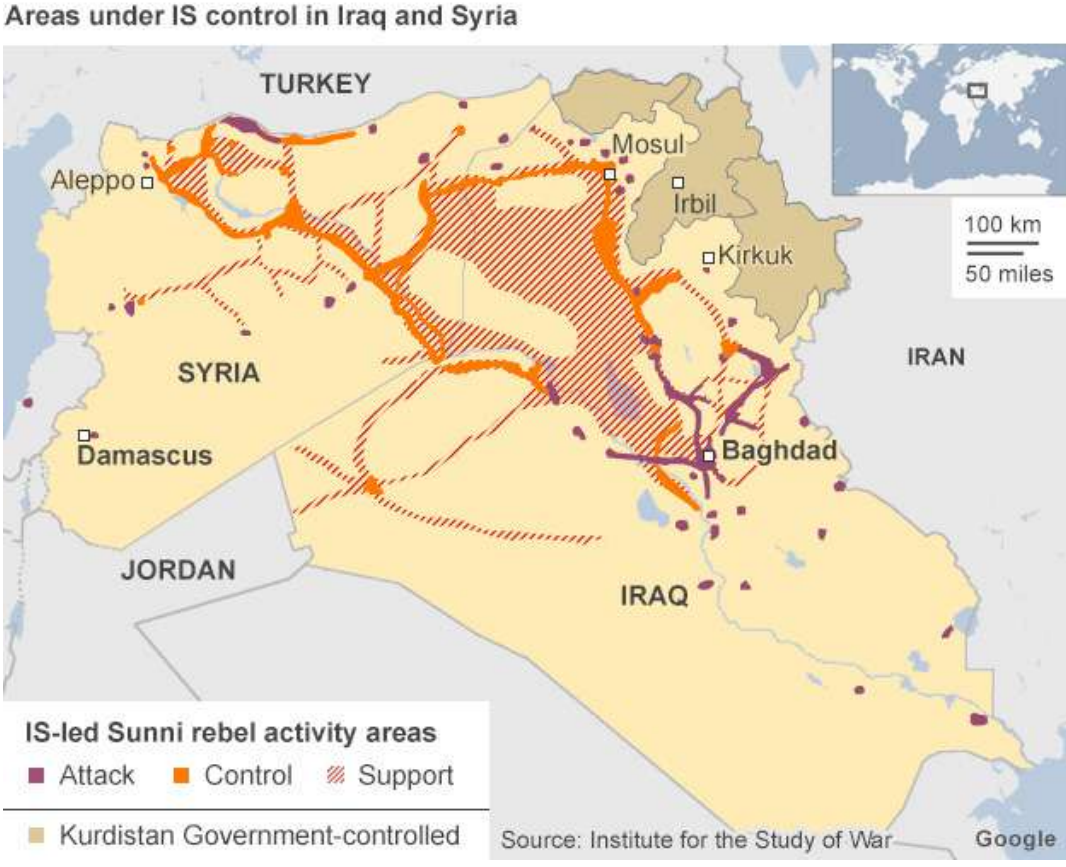
Aside from agricultural expansion, factors driving the rise in deforestation include illegal logging and the invasion of public lands adjacent to big infrastructure projects, such as roads and hydroelectric dams, according to World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF).



According to the government report, the states of Pará and Mato Grosso — where most of Brazil's agricultural expansion is taking place — showed the greatest increases in deforestation. More than 390 square miles have been cleared in those states. Curbing deforestation worldwide is an integral part of reducing climate change because deforestation accounts for 15 percent of all annual greenhouse gas emissions, according to WWF. Globally, forests are depleted by up to 58,000 square miles every year — equivalent to 36 football fields every minute, according to the WWF. As well as the cost to curbing climate change, deforestation threatens a wide range of plant and animal species.

Islamic State crisis: Arab states join US fight

Ten Arab countries have agreed to help the US in its fight against the jihadist group, Islamic State (IS). After talks with US Secretary of State John Kerry in Jeddah, they pledged to provide military support and humanitarian aid, and to halt the flow of funds and foreign fighters to IS.



Mr Kerry told "full-throatedly ready" to combat the group. However, Russia warned the US against expanding its campaign of air strikes from Iraq into neighbouring Syria.



The Russian foreign ministry said any such action, without the backing of the UN Security Council, would be "an act of aggression" and a "gross violation" of international law. On Wednesday, President Barack Obama set out his plans to "destroy and degrade" IS and revealed that he had authorised air strikes in Syria. Mr Kerry has been tasked with building a broad coalition against IS, also known as Isis or Isil. On Thursday, ministers representing Bahrain, Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates offered their support.

ISIS

Air Campaign Against ISIS to Target Leaders and Seized U.S. Weapons

C.S. Rajput

Accelerated U.S. bombing campaign against ISIS in Iraq — and Syria — will focus in part on eliminating key leaders and destroying the heavy U.S. weapons the Islamic extremist group seized this spring, U.S. officials tell. The stepped-up bombardment to “degrade and destroy” the Sunni extremist group and increased support for “partner forces on the ground” were outlined by President Barack Obama in a nationally broadcast speech Wednesday night.

At the outset of the intensified air campaign, some in the U.S. intelligence community already are questioning whether ISIS can sustain itself. Doubters cite the increasing loss of U.S. weapons that ISIS fighters seized from retreating Iraqi army troops this spring, increasing financial challenges and the fact that its forces appear to be overextended.

The U.S. officials, say Washington and its allies will increasingly attempt to take out senior ISIS officials, likely including its leader, Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi. Obama will make the final determination on which ISIS officials are targeted, placing their names on a presidential “kill list” for drone attacks after receiving briefings and recommendations from senior advisers. The priority will be leaders who want to carry out attacks on U.S. interests.

Already three senior members of ISIS were killed in a U.S. air attack last week, although Pentagon officials said they were not specifically targeted.

The officials say the selective strikes on leadership can have a big impact. They note that when the U.S. jets killed Abu Musab al Zarqawi, the leader of the ISIS predecessor organization, al Qaeda in Iraq, in 2006, the group fell into decline before eventually resurfacing in Syria. One official said the targeted killings have a very specific rationale.

“We want to have them (the leaders) fighting for his own survival rather than have the space to plot against us,” the official said. “It’s simple equation. We want them to have less of a chance to strike out beyond the border.”

The increased airstrikes will add to the military challenges facing ISIS, which in the last month has tried to solidify control of its self-declared “caliphate” even as it came under attack by U.S. warplanes and drones in Iraq.

Among other things, the officials said, the group’s leaders are dealing with “expiration dates” on the heavy U.S. weapons it seized -- including armored personnel carriers, artillery, rocket launchers and mortars. In other words, the ISIS forces have a finite supply of ammunition, fuel and spare parts that they won’t be able to easily replace, which could quickly render the U.S. weapons useless, they say.

ISIS also is believed to have a shortage of trained personnel capable of maintaining the equipment, though Pentagon officials who spoke with NBC News acknowledged that they can’t say with any certainty how many Iraqi army maintenance personnel captured by ISIS are working -- either voluntarily or forcibly -- to maintain it.

The expansion of the aerial campaign to Syria is expected to further hasten the degradation of ISIS’ military capabilities by denying it the ability to move the weapons there to escape U.S. attacks.

While the officials expect the expanded U.S. bombing to put ISIS on the defensive for the first time since it emerged as the most serious threat to the regime of Syrian President Bashar Assad, the officials said they do not foresee a quick collapse of the battle-hardened group.

For one thing, they note, ISIS retains “significant firepower,” mostly Russian-made weapons captured from the Syrian military. While not as sophisticated as the U.S. equipment, these weapons are easier to maintain and, with so many nations having vast stores of Russian arms, spare parts and ammunition are easier to obtain on the black market.

“ISIS has huge reserves of Syrian arms,” said one official, pointing out that the caliphate is headquartered in Raqqa, Syria, the home of a huge Syrian military arms depot.



U.S. Aims to Root Out 'Ungoverned Spaces' as Hotbeds of Terrorism

The maps don't show it, but two new "countries" have emerged in the last 15 months. The first, a porous zone extending 400 miles from the suburbs of Baghdad to the town of Raqqa in central Syria, is the so-called Islamic State caliphate established by ISIS, a place where transgressions of sharia law can lead to crucifixion or being buried alive, and simply being an American could get you beheaded.

The second, thousands of miles to the southwest, is a tract of up to 10,000 square miles in Nigeria controlled by Boko Haram, which torches schools with children inside and kidnaps young girls for forced marriage or ransom. U.S. intelligence analysts call these territories “ungoverned spaces” -- even though both ISIS and Boko Haram act as governments in some senses -- and have seen before how the chaos and savagery within them can spread far and wide. It was not long ago, after all, when al Qaeda and the Taliban filled an ungoverned space in Afghanistan, enabling the former to plot and carry out the Sept. 11 terror attacks on the United States.

"There is 10-plus-years’ worth of literature on ungoverned and undergoverned spaces and the risks posed," says Mike Leiter, former director of the National Counter Terrorism Center. "It's certainly a problem and an area that the U.S. government is particularly challenged in addressing."

Fearing that newer safe havens also could eventually become "external operations platforms" for attacks against Western and U.S. interests, the CIA has stepped up its monitoring of 12 countries that include significant ungoverned spaces where Islamic extremists are operating.

The list is classified, but U.S. officials confirmed 10 of the countries on it in interviews. They are: Afghanistan and Pakistan in South Asia; Syria, Iraq and Yemen in the Middle East; and Libya, Mauritania, Mali, Nigeria and Somalia in Africa.

The top U.S. concerns

Concern is highest over the new "countries" carved out by ISIS and Boko Haram, neither of which existed early last year. They may not last long, but they are now "facts on the ground," military officials say, with black flags of jihad flying over local government buildings and sharia courts.

Some experts say that neither group poses a threat to the West at this point, despite the fact that while both Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, leader of ISIS, and Abubakr Shekau, head of Boko Haram, employ anti-U.S. rhetoric, neither has specifically threatened to attack the U.S.

"The big question is are these 'sharia states' inward-looking or launch points for international terrorism?," said David Phillips, director of peace-building at Columbia University's Center on Human Rights. "I would count them (ISIS and Boko Haram) as inward looking, not capable of launching an attack on New York, not having the financing, more ideologically committed to jihad and development of military skills. That is a different level of threat."

But U.S. Defense Secretary Chuck Hagel said

on Thursday that ISIS is "beyond anything we have seen," and poses a more significant long-term threat to the U.S. than al Qaeda.

And counterterrorism officials and other experts warned that the longer a space is ungoverned, the more likely radical groups will "create parallel infrastructures" as ISIS and Boko Haram have begun to do.

Both already are "terrorist states with terrorist armies" capable of creating panic in cities of a half million or more, said one official, referring to Erbil in Iraqi Kurdistan and Maiduguri in Nigeria. And, if unchecked, either could spread their intolerance and brutality to neighboring countries.

The difficulty, said one U.S. official, who like the others spoke on condition of anonymity, is that Washington has limited options to deal with ungoverned spaces in faraway lands.

Ideally, the official said, the U.S. can work with the central government and help shore up its military capabilities, or work through surrogate partners, as the U.S. did with the Sunni Awakening in western Iraq against al Qaeda in Iraq, the predecessor of ISIS.

But neither is possible in many cases. Often a central government's control is limited to the capital city and its suburbs, and its defenses rely on what one senior Pentagon official described as a "marshmallow military" that quickly dissolves in the face of any serious threat.

"You're asking a guy who hasn't been paid in three months and whose officers abuse him to fight to the death," said the official.

That may force the U.S. military to get involved rather than risk letting the jihadis overrun entire countries, as is the case with the current U.S. air campaign against ISIS.

A simple aim

The aim of such operations is simple, the official said: "You want the terrorist fighting for his own survival rather than (having) the space to plot against us. ... Isolating them plus applying pressure equals the less chance they have for striking out beyond the border."

While the perils posed by such islands of instability are well known, the U.S. intelligence community still isn't very good at predicting or preventing such uprisings, said Karen Greenberg, director of the Center on National Security at Fordham University. The rise of Isis and its lightning march across Mesopotamia, in particular, highlights those shortcomings, she said.

Why the Obama Administration Keeps Saying 'Degrade and Destroy'

President Obama and his press secretary have a new favorite catchphrase.

"Our objective is clear: We will degrade, and ultimately destroy, ISIL," Obama said in his prime-time speech Wednesday night, in which he laid out his long-term counterterrorism plan against the militant group Islamic State in Iraq and Syria.

The president's promise came days after he first told Americans he would "degrade and ultimate destroy" ISIS, also referred to as the Islamic State or ISIL, and a day after White House Press Secretary Josh Earnest used "degrade and destroy" (or variations of the phrase)

a whopping dozen or so times in a press briefing. "Degrade and destroy," as short of a phrase as it is, is brimming with meaning, experts say. In three or four quick, easy-to-remember words, Obama and his administration are doing their best to make clear they have a strategy for dealing with an international threat and separating themselves from past Iraq failures.

"What they're trying to do here is develop a way to frame the issue in such a way that it doesn't mean you're at war, it doesn't mean you're trying to save the country, et cetera," said George Lakoff, a linguistics professor at University of California Berkeley and author of multiple books on how political discourse is framed. "What they're doing is setting up a way for the public to understand what the policy is. They were terrible about framing the [Affordable Care Act] health care plan and so on."

He added that it addresses concerns that Americans have right now. "This phrase says, given where [ISIS] is currently, we're going to go away from that and make things worse for them and therefore better for us."

Obama received considerable backlash last Thursday when he was asked about his plans for ISIS amid the recent news that in addition to terrorizing Iraqis and posing a threat to the Middle East, the group beheaded two American journalists in separately released videos. "I don't want to put the cart before the horse," Obama said at the time. "We don't have a strategy yet."

He first used "degrade and destroy" the next day. By repeating the "de-" prefix, which essentially means "to take away" in Latin, the phrase is a clear message to the public that there is indeed a well-planned-out strategy for stopping ISIS in its tracks, Lakoff said.

"Repeating the two 'de-'s twice intensifies it. It means we're really going to do this. It also lengthens it. It says there's a sequence. You can't just go in, bomb it, and it's over. You can't just send in troops and it's done. There's a process. It does both of those things at once," he said.

The catchphrase starkly contrasts with a slogan that was used the last time the United States got involved in Iraq: George W. Bush's "shock and awe" doctrine, which was intended to be a quick burst of military might that would stabilize Iraq, but didn't end up being quick at all.

Both Lakoff and Reid Cherlin, a magazine writer and former Obama press aide, said everything about "degrade and destroy" shows it is taking the opposite tack that "shock and awe" did. "Degrade and destroy is pretty evocative because you can see it happening in your mind. It's repeated airstrikes with the theoretical endpoint of there being no ISIS," Cherlin said. "You could just say 'destroy' to start with and leave out the 'degrade,' but probably most of what we'll be doing is the degrading, and the 'destroy' is the hopeful part."

"The Pentagon and the military in general often use commonplace words in a slightly different way than what we are used to, and I hear that in 'degrade,'" he said. "We're used to hearing it as something being degrading or something degraded by that. We're not used to hearing it as an active, transitive verb."

Obama: Vision of peaceful Europe threatened by "Russia's aggression"

As Air Force One landed in Estonia's capital Wednesday, President Barack Obama's message to Vladimir Putin -- only 500 miles away in Moscow -- was clear: Stay put.

Obama's trip to the former Soviet state, ahead of this week's NATO summit in Wales, is meant to reassure nervous Eastern Europe that Putin's support for separatists in Ukraine doesn't mean he has a free pass for territorial gains elsewhere.

In a speech in Tallinn, Obama said the vision of a Europe dedicated to peace and freedom is "threatened by Russia's aggression against Ukraine," but said NATO will not allow that aggression to go unchecked.

"We will defend our NATO allies, and that means every ally," he said. "We will be here for Estonia. ... You lost your independence once before. With NATO, you will never lose it again." Added to the schedule only last month, the stop in Estonia supplements the message coming from NATO leaders gathering in Cardiff, Wales, who are set to announce the positioning of troops and equipment closer to Russia in Eastern Europe.

In earlier comments alongside Estonia's President, Obama recalled the "deep ties" between the two nations as he announced plans for additional U.S. Air Force units to be based in Estonia as part of a bolstering of NATO forces in the region.

"One of our goals at the summit over the next several days is to once again project unity across NATO on behalf of Ukraine's efforts to maintain its sovereignty and territorial integrity," Obama said.

He added that Russia was "paying a heavy price for its actions," in part through Western sanctions imposed over Ukraine, and that NATO is poised to do more to help Ukraine defend itself.

He said more European NATO members need to spend a full 2% of their gross domestic product on defense to keep NATO strong.

The approaching NATO summit is an opportunity for these countries to pledge this, he said. "Estonia does it. Every ally must do it," he said.

The NATO leaders also must confront the separate threat of militant Islamists making gains in Syria and Iraq, and the brutal beheading of a second American by ISIS, also known as ISIL or the "Islamic State."

Asked about his strategy on the extremist group, Obama said: "The bottom line is this: Our objective is clear, and that is to degrade and destroy ISIL so it's no longer a threat not just to Iraq, but also to the region and to the United States.

"In order for us to accomplish that, the first phase has been to make sure we've got an Iraqi government that's in place, and that we are blunting the momentum that ISIL was carrying out.

"And the airstrikes have done that. But now, what we need to do is make sure that we've got the regional strategy in place that can support an ongoing effort, not just in the air, but on the ground, to move that forward."

Analyst: NATO must adapt

The original reason for the summit was to determine how NATO's mission will proceed in Afghanistan when combat troops depart at the end of the year.

But the global unrest, while causing political strife for Obama in the United States, could provide a new purpose for the 65-year-old NATO alliance, which is suffering an "identity crisis," according to one analyst.

Putin's actions in Russia have "required NATO to really adapt and change fairly dramatically," said Heather Conley, who directs the Europe program at the Center for Strategic and International Studies in Washington.

Warning Putin

NATO members that border Russia, watching the once unthinkable breach of Ukraine's borders, are looking to the military alliance to affirm its commitment to the North Atlantic Treaty's Article 5, which provides for collective defense of states under attack.

Ukraine isn't a NATO member, though leaders did invite the country's new President, Petro Poroshenko, to Wales this week. Other former Soviet states, like Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania, joined NATO in the past decade, hoping to bolster ties to the West while increasing their own security frameworks.

As reassurance to those countries, NATO leaders plan to approve the creation of a "high-readiness" force that places new equipment and thousands of troops in Eastern Europe.

Ukraine warns of return to 'full-scale war'

White House officials say the move is meant to be defensive rather than a provocation for Russia, though initial reaction from the Kremlin -- which called the move an "external threat" -- foreshadowed a potential escalation of the crisis.

NATO and Russia have agreed since 1997 that no permanent NATO troops will be positioned in Eastern Europe, meaning member states will rotate forces through bases closest to Russia.

Charles Kupchan, Obama's top adviser for European affairs, said leaders will describe the new effort as a "persistent" force in the easternmost countries, rather than "permanent." "We will see persistent rotation, persistent exercises to ensure that Estonia and that other countries in Central and Eastern Europe are provided the reassurance from NATO and the presence of NATO needed to meet their security needs," he said.

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Ebola

virus epidemic in West Africa

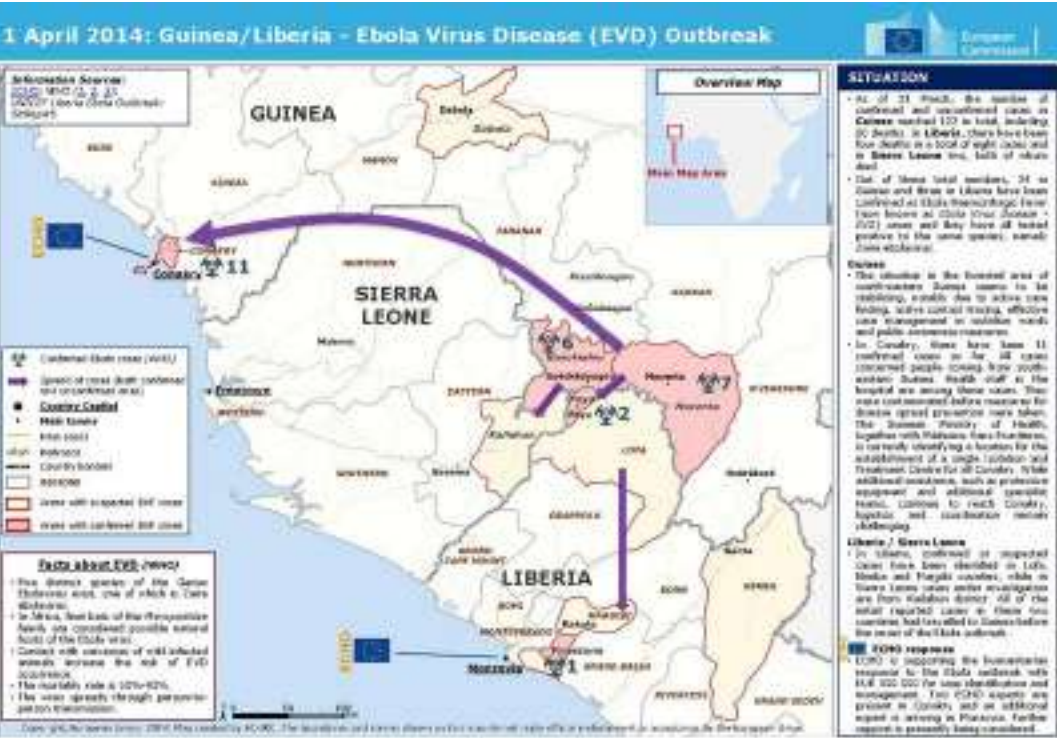
As of 2014, an epidemic of Ebola virus disease (EVD) is ongoing in West Africa. The outbreak began in Guinea in December 2013, but was not detected until March 2014, after which it spread to Liberia, Sierra Leone, Nigeria and Senegal. The outbreak is caused by Ebola virus (EBOV). It is the most severe outbreak of Ebola in terms of the number of human cases and deaths since the discovery of the virus in 1976, with the number of cases from the current outbreak now outnumbering the combined cases from all known previous outbreaks. Another outbreak in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, which has 59 possible and confirmed cases and 32 deaths as of 6 September 2014, is believed to be unrelated to the West African outbreak.

As of 6 September 2014, the World Health Organization (WHO) and the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) reported a total of 4,293 suspected cases and 2,296 deaths (2,552 cases and 1,386 deaths being laboratory confirmed). Many experts believe that the official numbers substantially understate the size of the outbreak because of families' widespread reluctance to report cases. On 28 August, the WHO reported an overall case fatality rate estimate of 52%, considerably lower than an average of rates reported from previous outbreaks.

Affected countries have encountered many difficulties in their attempt to control the spread of this Ebola epidemic, the first that West African nations have experienced. In some areas, people have become suspicious of both the government and hospitals; some hospitals have been attacked by angry protestors who believe that the disease is a hoax or that the hospitals are responsible for the disease. Many of the areas that have been infected are areas of extreme poverty without even running water or soap to help control the spread of disease. Other factors include belief in traditional folk remedies, and cultural practices that predispose to physical contact with the deceased, especially death customs such as washing the body of the deceased. Some hospitals lack basic supplies and are understaffed, which has increased the likelihood of staff catching the virus themselves. In August, the WHO reported that ten percent of the dead have been health care workers.



By the end of August, the WHO reported that the loss of so many health workers was making it difficult for them to provide sufficient numbers of foreign medical staff. By September 2014, Médecins Sans Frontières, the largest NGO working in the affected regions, had grown increasingly critical of the international response. Speaking on 3 September, the international president spoke out concerning the lack of assistance from the United Nations member countries saying, "Six months into the worst Ebola epidemic in history, the world is losing the battle to contain it". The Director-General of the WHO, Margaret Chan, called the outbreak "the largest, most complex and most severe we've ever seen" and said that it "is racing ahead of control efforts". A United Nations spokesperson stated "they could stop the Ebola outbreak in west Africa in 6 to 9 months, but only if a 'massive' global response is implemented."



Projected casualties and deaths

The WHO released its first estimate of the possible total cases (20,000) from the outbreak on 28 August 2014 as part of its road map for stopping the transmission of the virus. The WHO Roadmap states "This Roadmap assumes that in many areas of intense transmission the actual number of cases may be 2 - 4 fold higher than that currently reported. It acknowledges that the aggregate case load of EVD could exceed 20,000 over the course of this emergency. The Roadmap assumes that a rapid escalation of the complementary strategies in intense transmission, resource-constrained areas will allow the comprehensive application of more standard containment strategies within 3 months." The WHO Roadmap does not provide details of how it made this total casualty estimate or a more detailed projection of how Ebola casualty statistics might evolve over time. The WHO's road map also includes an assumption that some country or countries will pay the required cost of their plan, estimated at half a billion dollars. In an article published 4 September 2014 in Newsweek, Anthony Fauci, Director of [the US] NIH's National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases, said the outbreak is "completely out of control", adding "adding that 42 percent of all African ebola cases occurred in the last month." The article further notes "... in West Africa right now, the rate of infection is exponential, he says. 'The number of cases per unit time is dramatically increasing.'" Similar comments were made by Thomas Kenyon, Director of the US Centers of Disease Control, in an article published 3 September 2014, who is reported to have said "The highly virulent disease, which has claimed more than 1,900 lives so far, is spreading faster than health workers in Guinea, Liberia, Nigeria and Sierra Leone can manage". On 8 September 2014, WHO warned the number of new cases in Liberia was increasing exponentially, and would increase by "many thousands" in the following 3 weeks.

Initial outbreak in Guinea

Researchers believe that the first human case of the Ebola virus disease leading to the 2014 outbreak was a 2-year-old boy who died 6 December 2013 in the village of Meliandou, Guéckédou Prefecture, Guinea. His mother, 3-year-old sister and grandmother then became ill with symptoms consistent with Ebola infection and died. People infected by those victims spread the disease to other villages.



On 19 March, the Guinean Ministry of Health acknowledged a local outbreak of an undetermined viral hemorrhagic fever; the outbreak, ongoing since February, had sickened at least 35 people and killed 23. Ebola was suspected, and samples had been sent to Senegal and France for disease identification. On 25 March, the World Health Organization (WHO) reported that the Ministry of Health of Guinea had reported an outbreak of Ebola virus disease in four south-eastern districts: Guekedou, Macenta, Nzerekore, and Kissidougou with suspected cases in the neighbouring countries of Liberia and Sierra Leone being investigated. In Guinea, a total of 86 suspected cases, including 59 deaths (case fatality ratio: 68.5%), had been reported as of 24 March. On 31 March, the US Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) sent a five-person team to assist Guinea Ministry of Health and WHO to lead an international response to the Ebola outbreak. On that date, the WHO reported 112 suspected and confirmed cases including 70 deaths. Two cases were reported from Liberia of people who had recently traveled to Guinea, and suspected cases in Liberia and Sierra Leone were being investigated. On 30 April, Guinea's Ministry of Health reported 221 suspected and confirmed cases including 146 deaths. The cases included 25 health care workers with 16 deaths. By late May, the outbreak had spread to Conakry, Guinea's capital, a city of about two million inhabitants. On 28 May, the total cases reported had reached 281 with 186 deaths.

Subsequent spread
In Liberia, the disease was reported in Lofa and Nimba counties in late March, and, by mid-April, the Ministry of Health and Social Welfare had recorded possible cases in Margibi and Montserrado counties. In mid-June, the first cases in Liberia's capital Monrovia were reported. Sierra Leone, Mali, and Ghana identified suspected cases of the disease by mid-April, but all clinical samples of suspected cases at the time tested negative for the Ebola virus. In Guinea, from 23 to 27 May, three previously affected districts (Guéckédou, Macenta, and Conakry), and four new districts (Boffa, Téliélé, Boke, and Dubréka) reported cases. The outbreak progressed rapidly in Sierra Leone. The first cases were reported on 25 May in the Kailahun District, near the border with Guéckédou in Guinea. By 20 June, there were 158 suspected cases, mainly in Kailahun and the adjacent district of Kenema, but also in the Kambia, Port Loko, and Western districts in the north west of the country. By 17 July, the total number of suspected cases in the country stood at 442, and had overtaken those in Guinea and Liberia. By 20 July, cases of the disease had additionally been reported in the Bo District; the first case in Freetown, Sierra Leone's capital, was reported in late July.

Ebola virus disease

Ebola, which first appeared in outbreaks in Sudan and DR Congo in 1976, is a severe and often fatal disease with no known specific treatment or vaccine. It has since killed more than 1,500 people in parts of Africa.

SOURCE

In Africa, particular species of fruit bats are considered possible natural hosts for Ebola virus.

Fruit bat
Gorilla
Chimpanzee
Shrew

TRANSMISSION

Infected bats are thought to transmit the disease to humans, or indirectly through other animals which are hunted for their meat.

Possible routes

- Close contact with the blood, secretions, organs or other bodily fluids of infected or dead animals
- Consumption of infected bushmeat
- Touching objects that have come in contact with the virus.

DAMAGE

Incubation period is from two to 21 days. Death from the disease is often caused by multiple organ failure and tissue death.

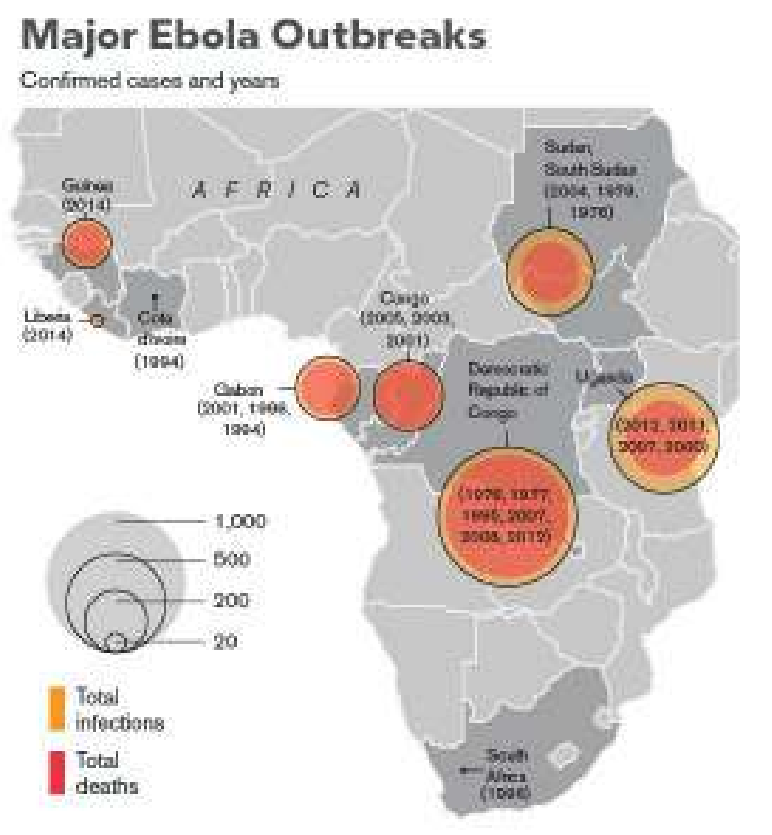
Targets in the body

- Hepatocytes, functional cells of the liver
- Endothelial cells, which form the linings of the blood vessels
- Phagocytes, blood cells that absorb foreign particles

Symptoms

- Fever
- Sore throat
- Severe headache
- Muscle pain
- Intense weakness
- Vomiting
- Diarrhea
- Impaired liver and kidney function
- Internal and external bleeding

Note: List of animals is not exhaustive.
Sources: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention; World Health Organisation



The first case in Nigeria was reported by the WHO on 25 July: Patrick Sawyer, a Liberian Ministry of Finance official, flew from Liberia to Nigeria after exposure to the virus, and died at Lagos soon after arrival. In response, the hospital where he was being treated was shut down and quarantined, and the health officials who were treating him were isolated in an attempt to stop the spread of the virus. However, a doctor and nurse who treated Sawyer both died from Ebola. On 29 August, the Senegalese Health minister, Awa Marie Coll Seck, announced the first case of Ebola in Senegal. The case has been confirmed in Senegal.

Ebola economic effects

- In addition to the loss of life, the outbreak is having a number of significant economic impacts.
- The outbreak is straining the finances of governments, with Sierra Leone using Treasury bills to fund the fight against the virus.
 - The U.N. Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) has warned that the outbreak could endanger harvest and food security in West Africa.
 - The IMF is considering expanding assistance to Guinea, Sierra Leone, and Liberia as their national deficits balloon and their economies contract sharply.
 - Markets and shops are closing, due to travel restrictions, cordon sanitaire, or fear of human contact, leading to loss of income for producers and traders.
 - Movement of people away from affected areas has disturbed agricultural activities.
 - Tourism is directly impacted in affected countries. Other countries in Africa which are not directly affected by the virus have also reported adverse effects on tourism.
 - Foreign mining companies have withdrawn non-essential personnel, deferred new investment, and cut back operations.
 - Many airlines have experienced reduced traffic. Some airlines have suspended flights to the area.
 - Forecasts of economic growth have been reduced. An initial World Bank-IMF assessment for Guinea projects a full percentage point fall in GDP growth from 4.5 percent to 3.5 percent

Response by organisations provide care

World Health Organization

The World Health Organisation's (WHO) Regional Director for Africa, Luis Sambo, visited the affected countries from 21 to 25 July, meeting with political leaders, ministers of health, NGOs, and other agencies. He stressed the need to "promote behavioural change while respecting cultural practices." On 24 July, WHO's Director General met with agencies and donors in Geneva to facilitate an increase in funding and manpower to respond to the outbreak.

WHO declared the outbreak an international public health emergency on 8 August, after a two-day teleconference of experts. On 11 August, they emphasised lack of supplies and capacity as one of the problems, while local awareness of the disease had increased. Revised guidelines on how to prevent the spread of the disease were released, updating guidelines from 2008.

On 28 August, the WHO said it is seeking \$490 million in funding to fight the outbreak. They report that they "are on the ground establishing Ebola treatment centres and strengthening capacity for laboratory testing, contact tracing, social mobilization, safe burials, and non-Ebola health care" and "continue to monitor for reports of rumoured or suspected cases from countries around the world." Other than cases where individuals are suspected or have been confirmed of being infected with Ebola, or have had contact with cases of Ebola, the WHO does not recommend any travel or trade restrictions.

US Centers for Disease Control

On 31 July, US health officials from the US Centers for Disease Control (CDC) issued a travel advisory for Guinea, Liberia, and Sierra Leone, warning against non-essential travel. By 26 August, the CDC had issued a Level 3 travel warning for Sierra Leone, Guinea, and Liberia and a Level 2 travel warning for Nigeria. The Level 3 warning is the highest that can be issued and will be in place until 27 February 2015. It means that United States residents must avoid nonessential travel to the three countries worst hit by the virus.

By the beginning of August, the US Centers for Disease Control had placed staff in Guinea, Sierra Leone, Liberia, and Nigeria to assist the local Ministries of Health and WHO-led response to the outbreak. On 6 August, the Centers for Disease Control moved its Ebola response to Level 1 (the highest on a scale from 1 to 6) to increase the agency's ability to respond to the outbreak.

On 29 August, the CDC issued a Level 2 travel warning for the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), warning against contact with body fluids of people with Ebola.

Médecins Sans Frontières

The humanitarian aid organisation Médecins Sans Frontières (Doctors Without Borders) started its Ebola intervention in West Africa in March 2014 and is now present in Guinea, Liberia, Nigeria, and Sierra Leone. By the end of August, the organization ran five Ebola case management centers with a total capacity of 415 beds. Since March, MSF has admitted a total of 1,885 patients. Of these patients 907 tested positive for Ebola and 170 recovered. MSF has deployed 184 international staff to the region and employs 1,800 nationally hired personnel. On 29 August MSF described the international response as slow and derisory.

Samaritan's Purse

Samaritan's Purse is also providing direct patient care in multiple locations in Liberia. At a congressional committee hearing on 7 August 2014, the head of Samaritan's Purse stated that "The disease is uncontained and out of control in West Africa."

World Food Program

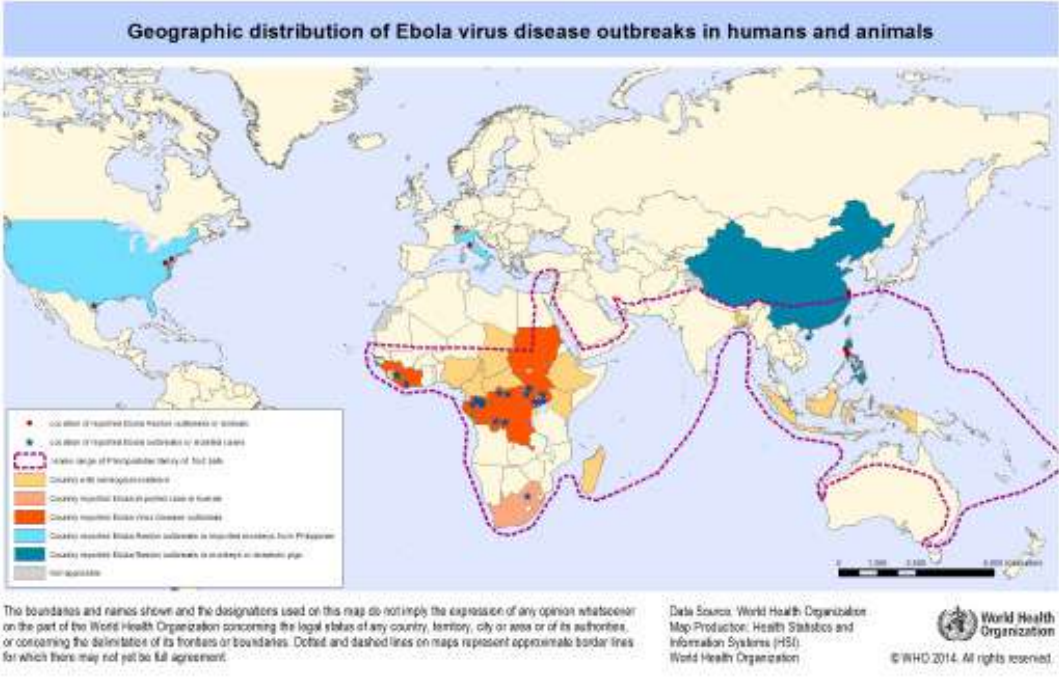
On 18 August, World Food Program announced plans to mobilise food assistance for an estimated 1 million people living in restricted access areas.

World Bank Group

The World Bank Group has pledged up to US \$200 million in emergency funding to help Guinea, Liberia, and Sierra Leone contain the spread of Ebola infections, help their communities cope with the economic impact of the crisis, and improve public health systems throughout West Africa.

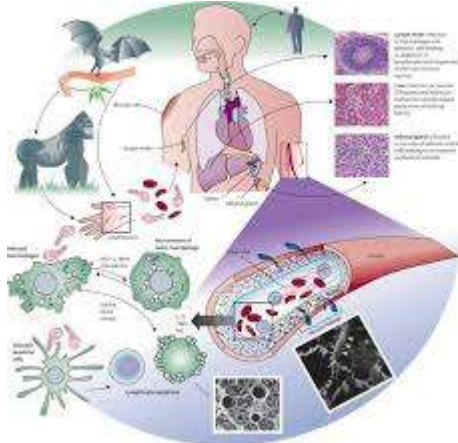
Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation

On 10 September the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation released \$50 million to the United Nations and other international aid agencies fighting the epidemic. The foundation also donated \$2 million to the CDC to assist them with their burden. The funds were released with immediate effect. Previous donations consisted of \$5 million to the WHO and \$5 million to UNICEF to buy medical supplies and fund support efforts in the region. This brings the Seattle-based Foundation's total contribution to date over \$60 million. "We are working urgently with our partners to identify the most effective ways to help them save lives now and stop transmission of this deadly disease," the Foundation CEO said in a statement.



CONTAINMENT EFFORTS

Various aid organisations and international bodies, including the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), and the European Commission have donated funds and mobilised personnel to help counter the outbreak; charities including Médecins Sans Frontières, the Red Cross, and Samaritan's Purse are also working in the area. At the end of August, the WHO reported that the loss of so many health workers was making it difficult for them to provide sufficient numbers of foreign medical staff, and the African Union launched an urgent initiative to recruit more health care workers from among its members.



Médecins Sans Frontières described the situation as being "totally out of control" in late June. Urging the world to offer aid to the affected regions, the Director-General said, "Countries affected to date simply do not have the capacity to manage an outbreak of this size and complexity on their own. I urge the international community to provide this support on the most urgent basis possible."

The outbreak was formally designated as a public health emergency of international concern on 8 August. This is a legal designation used only twice before (for the 2009 H1N1 (swine flu) pandemic and the 2014 resurgence of polio) and invokes legal measures on disease prevention, surveillance, control, and response, by 194 signatory countries.

Disease reports accelerated in August with 40% of the total cases reported in a period of only three weeks. The WHO stated that the acceleration could see the number of cases reported exceed 20,000.

Speaking at a United Nations (UN) briefing on 2 September, Joanne Liu, international president of Médecins Sans Frontières, criticized the lack of assistance from UN member countries. "Six months into the worst Ebola epidemic in history, the world is losing the battle to contain it. In West Africa, cases and deaths continue to surge. Riots are breaking out. Isolation centers are overwhelmed. Health workers on the front lines are becoming infected and are dying in shocking numbers. Others have fled in fear, leaving people without care for even the most common illnesses. Entire health systems have crumbled. Ebola treatment centers are reduced to places where people go to die alone, where little more than palliative care is offered. It is impossible to keep up with the sheer number of infected people pouring into facilities. In Sierra Leone, infectious bodies are rotting in the streets."

Speaking in September after visiting Liberia, Sierra Leone, and Guinea, Tom Frieden, director of the US CDC, said, "There is a window of opportunity to tamp this down, but that window is closing ... we need action now to scale up the response."

Travel restrictions

On 8 August, a cordon sanitaire, a disease fighting practice that forcibly isolates affected regions, was established in the triangular area where Guinea, Liberia, and Sierra Leone are separated only by porous borders and where 70 percent of the known cases had been found. By September, the closure of borders had caused a collapse of cross-border trade and was having a devastating effect on the economies of the involved countries. A United Nations spokesperson reported that the price of some food staples had increased by as much as 150% and warned that if they continue to rise widespread food shortages can be expected. A Financial Times report suggested the economic impact of the outbreak could kill more people than the virus itself.

On 2 September, WHO Director-General Margaret Chan advised against travel restrictions saying that they are not justified and that they are preventing medical experts from entering the affected areas and "marginalizing the affected population and potentially worsening [the crisis]". UN officials working on the ground have also criticized the travel restrictions saying the solution is "not in travel restrictions but in ensuring that effective preventive and curative health measures are put in place." Médecins Sans Frontières, also speaking out against the closure of international borders, called it "another layer of collective irresponsibility": "The international community must ensure that those who try to contain the outbreak can enter and leave the affected countries if need be. A functional system of medical evacuation has to be set up urgently."

Complications in containment efforts

Difficulties faced in attempting to contain the outbreak include the outbreak's multiple locations across country borders, inadequate equipment provided for medical personnel, and lack of soap and water for hand-washing and disinfection. Containment efforts are further hindered because there is reluctance among country people to recognize the danger of infection related to person-to-person spread of disease, such as burial practices which include washing of the body of one that has died.

Extreme poverty

A condition of dire poverty exists in many of the areas that have experienced a high incidence of infections. According to the director of the NGO Plan International in Guinea, "The poor living conditions and lack of water and sanitation in most districts of Conakry pose a serious risk that the epidemic escalates into a crisis. People do not think to wash their hands when they do not have enough water to drink."

Rumours and denial

Denial in some affected countries has often made containment efforts difficult. Language barriers and the appearance of medical teams in protective suits has sometimes exaggerated fears of the virus. There are reports that some people believe that the disease is caused by sorcery and that doctors are killing patients. In late July, the former Liberian health minister, Peter Coleman, stated that "people don't seem to believe anything the government now says." Acting on a rumor that the virus was invented to conceal "cannibalistic rituals" (due to medical workers preventing families from viewing the dead), demonstrations were staged outside of the main hospital treating Ebola patients in Kenema, Sierra Leone. The demonstrations were broken up by the police and resulted in the need to use armed guards at the hospital. In Liberia, a mob attacked an Ebola isolation centre stealing equipment and "freeing" patients while shouting "There's no Ebola". Red Cross staff was forced to suspend operations in southeast Guinea after they were threatened by a group of men armed with knives.

Healthcare workers

Healthcare providers caring for Ebola patients and family and friends in close contact with Ebola patients are at the highest risk of getting sick because they may come in direct contact with the blood or body fluids of sick patients. Two American health workers that contracted the disease in Liberia and later recovered said that their team of workers had been following "to the letter all of the protocols for safety that were developed by the CDC and WHO", including a full body coverall, several layers of gloves, and face protection including goggles. One of the two, a physician, had worked with patients, but the other was working to help workers get in and out of their protective gear, while wearing protective gear herself. In an interview she stated, "At this time we have not been able to confirm 100 percent the method of contagion. We are working closely with CDC and WHO to investigate. It is just an incredibly contagious disease."

In some places affected by the current outbreak, care may be provided in clinics with limited

resources (for example, no running water, no climate control, no floors, and inadequate medical supplies), and workers could be in those areas for several hours with a number of Ebola infected patients. As of 11 August, healthcare workers have represented nearly 10 percent of the cases and fatalities, significantly impairing the ability to respond to the outbreak in a country which already faces a severe shortage of doctors. On 26 August, the WHO reported that more than 240 health care workers have developed Ebola in Guinea, Liberia, Nigeria, and Sierra Leone, and more than 120 have died. According to the WHO, the high proportion of infected medical staff can be explained by lack of the number of medical staff needed to manage such a large outbreak, shortages of protective equipment, or improperly using what is available, and "the compassion that causes medical staff to work in isolation wards far beyond the number of hours recommended as safe."

Comparing the present Ebola outbreak to some in the past, the WHO notes that many of the most recent districts in which epidemics have occurred were in remote areas where the transmission had been easier to track and break. This outbreak is different in that large cities have been affected as well, where tracking has been difficult and medical staff may not suspect Ebola disease when they make a diagnosis. Several infectious diseases endemic to West Africa, such as malaria and typhoid fever, mimic the symptoms of Ebola disease, and doctors and nurses may see no need to take protective measures. Also, without recent past experience with the disease, people have become intensely fearful and have, in some cases, attacked medical staff, believing that they cause the disease.

The WHO reports that in the hardest hit areas there have historically been only one or two doctors available to treat 100,000 people, and these doctors are heavily concentrated in urban areas; the loss of so many health workers has made it difficult for the WHO to provide sufficient numbers of medical staff. Among the fatalities is Samuel Brisbane, a former advisor to the Liberian Ministry of Health and Social Welfare, described as "one of Liberia's most high-profile doctors." In July, leading Ebola doctor Sheik Umar Khan from Sierra Leone died in the outbreak. His death was followed by two more deaths in Sierra Leone: Modupe Cole, a senior physician at the country's main referral facility, and Sahr Rogers, who worked in Kenema. The African Union has launched an urgent initiative to recruit more health care workers from among its members.

Treatment

No proven Ebola virus-specific treatment exists as of August 2014. Treatment is primarily supportive in nature and includes minimizing invasive procedures, balancing fluids and electrolytes to counter dehydration, administration of anticoagulants early in infection to prevent or control disseminated intravascular coagulation, administration of procoagulants late in infection to control bleeding, maintaining oxygen levels, pain management, and the use of medications to treat bacterial or fungal secondary infections. Early treatment may increase the chance of survival.

Level of care

In late August, Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF) called the situation "chaotic" and the medical response "inadequate". They report that they have expanded their operations but have been unable to keep up with the rapidly increasing need for assistance which has forced them to reduce the level of care they are able to offer: "It is not currently possible, for example, to administer intravenous treatments." Calling the situation "an emergency within the emergency", MSF reports that many hospitals have had to shut down due to lack of staff or fears of the virus among patients and staff which has left people with other health problems without any care at all. Speaking from a remote region, a MSF worker said that a shortage of protective equipment was making the medical management of the disease difficult and that they had limited capacity to safely bury bodies.

Experimental treatments

The unavailability of treatments in the most-affected regions has spurred controversy, with some calling for experimental drugs to be made more widely available in Africa on a humanitarian basis, and others warning that making unproven drugs widely available would be unethical, especially in light of past experimentation conducted in developing countries by Western drug companies. As a result of the controversy, an expert panel of the WHO on 12 August endorsed the use of interventions with as-yet-unknown effects both for treatment and for prevention of Ebola, and also said that deciding which treatments should be used and how to distribute them equitably were matters that needed further discussion. Subsequently the WHO assistant director-general for health systems and innovation said on 5 September that transfusion of whole blood or purified serum from Ebola survivors is the therapy with the greatest potential to be implemented immediately on a large scale in West Africa, although there is little information on the efficacy of such treatment.

A number of experimental treatments are being studied or will undergo trials proximately: ZMapp, a monoclonal antibody vaccine. The limited supply of the drug has been used to treat a small number of individuals infected with the Ebola virus. Although some of these have recovered the outcome is not considered statistically significant. ZMapp has proved highly effective in a trial involving rhesus macaque monkeys.

TKM-Ebola, an RNA interference drug.

Favipiravir, a drug approved in Japan for stockpiling against influenza pandemics. The drug appears to be useful in a mouse model of the disease and Japan has offered to supply the drug if requested by the WHO.

The Jenner Institute has announced a first phase I trial of a vaccine targeted at the Zaire strain of Ebola virus that is causing the current outbreak, to commence mid-September.

Fatality rate

According to a website for collaborative analysis and discussion about the Ebola emergence, as of 7 August, attempts to create an accurate Case Fatality Rate (CFR) had been unreliable due to differences in testing policies, the inclusion of probable and suspected cases, and primarily the rate of new cases that have not run their course. However, on 28 August, the WHO made their first overall case fatality rate estimate of 52%. It ranges from 42% in Sierra Leone to 66% in Guinea. Compared to previous Zaire strain outbreaks, this number is quite low. The twelve Zaire strain outbreaks since the first one reported in the Democratic Republic of Congo in 1976 have had an average CFR of about 76%. Even the Sudan ebolavirus species, known to be less virulent than the Zaire species of the Ebola virus, has had an average CFR of about 57%. However, the WHO simply divided the number of deaths by the number of total cases; this is error prone and can underestimate the CFR as it includes new diagnoses who will not survive. A more accurate method that observed patient outcomes in Sierra Leone found 23 survivors among 77 patients, giving a CFR of 77%.



Response by country

Guinea

The border between Guinea and Liberia remained open in April; Guinea's ambassador in Monrovia noted his government's belief that efforts to fight the disease directly would be more effective than closing the border. In early August 2014, Guinea closed its borders with both Sierra Leone and Liberia to help contain the spread of the disease, as more new cases were being reported in those countries than in Guinea.

After Médecins Sans Frontières closed its treatment centers in May in the Macenta region, the virus resurfaced in early September in Guinea. The facility was closed thinking that the Ebola virus was contained in the area, leaving only a small skeleton staff to handle the region. Instead, high numbers of new cases reappeared in the region in late August. According to Marc Poncin, a coordinator for the organization, the new cases are related to persons returning to Guinea from neighbouring Liberia or Sierra Leone.

According to Dr Peter Piot, the scientist who co-discovered the Ebola virus, Ebola is not following its usual linear patterns as mapped out in previous outbreaks. This time the virus is "hopping" all over the West African epidemic region.

Liberia

By 23 July, the Liberian health ministry began to implement a strategic plan in line with the Accra meeting's conclusions to improve the country's response to the outbreak.

On 27 July, Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, the Liberian president, announced that Liberia would close its borders, with the exception of a few crossing points, such as the country's principal airport, where screening centres would be established, and the worst-affected areas in the country would be placed under quarantine. Football events were banned, because large gatherings and the nature of the sport increase transmission risks. Three days after the borders were closed, Sirleaf announced the closure of all schools nationwide, including the University of Liberia, and a few communities were to be quarantined. Sirleaf declared a state of emergency on 6 August, partly because the disease's weakening of the health care system has the potential to reduce the system's ability to treat routine diseases such as malaria; she noted that the state of emergency might require the "suspensions of certain rights and privileges." On the same day, the National Elections Commission announced that it would be unable to conduct the scheduled October 2014 senatorial election and requested postponement, one week after the leaders of various opposition parties had publicly taken different sides on the question.

On 18 August, a mob of residents from West Point, an impoverished area of Monrovia, descended upon a local Ebola clinic to protest its presence. The protesters turned violent, threatening the caretakers, removing the infected patients, and looting the clinic of its supplies, including blood-stained bed sheets and mattresses. Police and aid workers expressed fear that this would lead to mass infections of Ebola in West Point. The Liberian government has since quarantined the entirety of West Point, despite riots, and issued a curfew state-wide. On 22 August, it was reported that violence had again broken out after the military fired on protesting crowds.

On 22 August, officials announced that two people in Sinoe province had died from Ebola. This area was the last Ebola free area in Liberia. With 624 deaths recorded to date, the country has seen the highest death toll of all affected areas.

On 26 August, Tom Frieden, director of the U.S. Centers for Disease Control, said at a meeting attended by the Liberian President, Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, “Lots of hard work is happening. Lots of good things are happening, but the virus still has the upper hand.” President Sirleaf's office said in a statement that any top government officials who defied her orders to remain in Liberia or to return from any trips outside the country had been fired; how many or who had been dismissed was unclear.

The quarantine blockade in the West Point area, imposed by the Liberian president was lifted on 30 August. The Information Minister, Lewis Brown, said that this step was taken to ease efforts to screen, test, and treat residents for the disease. He added that this step does not mean the area is Ebola free. The quarantine blockade was in place since 19 August.

On 30 August, Liberia's Port Authority have cancelled all "shore passes" for sailors from ships coming into the country's four seaports. No one will be allowed to disembark from any commercial ships while in port. Three added screening points are in place for persons going on board a ship; these include the port gate, the security desk, and the pier.

An offer from U.S. President Barack Obama on 8 September 2014 to provide military support to assist in establishing isolation units and providing security for health workers was accepted by the Liberian government.

Nigeria

The first reported Ebola case in Nigeria was an imported case of a Liberian-American, Patrick Sawyer, who travelled by air from Liberia and became violently ill upon arriving in the city of Lagos. Sawyer died five days later, on 25 July. In response, the Nigerian government observed all of Sawyer's contacts for signs of infection and increased surveillance at all entry points to the country; health officials were placed at entry points to conduct tests on people arriving in the country. On 19 August, it was reported that the doctor who treated Sawyer, Ameyo Adadevoh, had also died of Ebola disease. Adadevoh, a descendant of Herbert Macaulay and Samuel Ajayi Crowther was posthumously praised for preventing the index case (Sawyer) from leaving the hospital at the time of diagnosis, thereby playing a key role in curbing the spread of the virus in Nigeria. On 6 August, Nigerian authorities confirmed the Ebola death of a nurse who had also treated Sawyer.

In July, Arik Air, Nigeria's main airline, stopped flights to Liberia and Sierra Leone.

On 9 August, the Nigerian National Health Research Ethics Committee, the organization regulating research ethics in the country, issued a statement waiving the regular administrative requirements that limit the international shipment of any biological samples out of Nigeria. The statement also supports the use of non-validated treatments without prior review and approval by a health research ethics committee.

On 14 August, the Nigerian government said Aliko Dangote had donated 150 million naira to halt the spread of the Ebola virus outbreak.

On 19 August, the Commissioner of Health in Lagos announced that Nigeria has seen twelve confirmed cases; four have died (including the index case) while another five, including two doctors and a nurse, have been declared disease-free and released. Other than increased surveillance at the country's borders, the Nigerian government states that they have also made attempts to control the spread of disease through an improvement in tracking, providing education to avert disinformation and increase accurate information, and the teaching of appropriate hygiene measures: "Efforts are currently ongoing to scale up and strengthen all aspects of response, including contact tracking, public information and community mobilization, case management and infection prevention and control, and coordination. There is now increased disease surveillance system in a bid to monitor, control, and prevent any occurrence of the disease".

On 22 August, a doctor who treated a Liberian diplomat in an unnamed hotel—who had contact with Patrick Sawyer—died in Port Harcourt from Ebola. The BBC report says the diplomat had escaped from quarantine in Lagos and travelled to the city for medical treatment. He however survived after being treated. At present, the total number of deaths from Ebola in Nigeria has been brought to six. The Good Heart Hospital and the unnamed hotel in Rivers State have been shut down. As a result, 70 suspected contacts have been quarantined.

Sierra Leone

The first person recorded to be infected with Ebola was a tribal healer who had treated an infected person, or persons, in her area and was reported to have died on 26 May. According to tribal tradition, her body was washed for her burial and several women from neighboring towns became infected.

On 1 April, Sierra Leone instituted a temporary measure which includes reactivation of its "Active Surveillance Protocol" that will see all travellers into the country from either Guinea or Liberia subjected to strict screening to ascertain their state of health. The government of Sierra Leone declared a state of emergency on 30 July and deployed troops to quarantine the hot spots of the epidemic.

On 29 July, well-known physician Sheik Umar Khan, Sierra Leone's only expert on hemorrhagic fever, died after contacting Ebola at his clinic in Kenema. Khan had long worked with Lassa fever patients, which kills over 5,000 a year in Sierra Leone, and he expanded his clinic to accept Ebola patients when the disease broke out. At his death, Sierra Leone President Ernest Bai Koroma celebrated Khan as a "national hero".

In August, awareness campaigns in Freetown, Sierra Leone's capital, were delivered over the radio or through car loudspeakers. Also in August, Sierra Leone passed a law that will subject a two-year jail term on anyone found to be hiding a person who is believed to be infected with Ebola disease. The new measure was announced as a top parliamentarian lashed out at neighbouring countries for failing to do more to curtail the outbreak.

On 26 August, the WHO said it had shut down one of its two laboratories in Sierra Leone after a health worker there was infected with Ebola. The laboratory is situated in the Kailahun district, one of the worst affected areas in Sierra Leone. This may disrupt efforts to increase the global response to the outbreak of the disease in the district. "It's a temporary measure to take care of the welfare of our remaining workers," WHO spokesperson Christy Feig announced. He did not specify how long the closure would last, but they will return after the WHO assessment of the situation. The medical worker is one of the first WHO staff infected by the Ebola Virus. The worker was first treated at a government hospital in Kenema and then evacuated to Germany for further treatment.

Senegal

In March, the Senegal Ministry of Interior ordered all movements of people through the southern border with Guinea to be suspended indefinitely to prevent the spread of the disease, according to a statement published on 29 March by state agency APS.

On 29 August, the Senegalese Health minister, Awa Marie Coll Seck, announced the first case of Ebola in the country. The patient arrived from the neighbouring country Guinea, where the virus was first reported. The case has been confirmed in Senegal. The patient, a university student from Guinea, is being treated in Dakar. Samples were sent to the Institut Pasteur, where Ebola was confirmed. The WHO was informed of the situation on 30 August and is treating the situation "as a top priority emergency", and it has now dispatched operational personnel to Dakar.

Countries with suspected or non-transmissible cases

Germany

Germany has set up a special isolation ward that will care for up to six patients at the University Medical Center Hamburg-Eppendorf to provide treatment for Ebola patients. On 27 August, the first patient arrived, a Senegalese epidemiologist who was working for the WHO in Sierra Leone.

India

On 27 August, a Health Ministry official said that 112 Indian citizens and four Nepalese citizens had landed in Mumbai and Delhi from Liberia. Of the 17 who had arrived in Delhi, one had fever symptoms and had been quarantined at the Airport Health Organisation (APHO), an airport medical facility. Six others were screened for Ebola, and five passengers who arrived on routine flights from affected countries showing fever symptoms had also been quarantined. Earlier, it was reported that an isolation facility with 120 beds was being created in the Hindu Hriday Samrat Jogeshwari trauma care hospital by Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC). On 28 August, the Health Ministry reported that 821 people were being monitored and tracked for the Ebola virus.

Spain

On 5 August, the Brothers Hospitallers of St. John of God confirmed that the Spanish Brother Miguel Pajares was infected with the Ebola virus while volunteering in Liberia. His repatriation, coordinated by the Spanish Ministry of Defence, occurred on 6 August 2014.

United Kingdom

In August, an isolation unit at the Royal Free Hospital in North London was prepared to treat patients with highly infectious diseases. On 24 August, William Pooley, a British citizen, was medically evacuated from Sierra Leone for treatment in the newly created unit. Pooley, a British health worker, is the first British citizen confirmed to have contracted the disease in Sierra Leone. On 3 September, the 29-year old Pooley was discharged from hospital after a making full recovery from the disease. According to his doctors, he no longer poses a risk to the community and is no longer infectious.

United States

American aid worker Kent Brantly became infected with Ebola, while working in a Monrovia treatment centre as medical director for the aid group Samaritan's Purse; Nancy Writebol, one of Brantly's missionary co-workers, became infected at the same time. Both were flown to the United States at the beginning of August for further treatment in Atlanta's Emory University Hospital, near the headquarters of the Centers for Disease Control. On 21 August, both Dr. Brantly and Ms. Writebol were discharged from Emory University Hospital, having recovered from the virus. Neither patient is considered contagious.

Other countries and economic regions

Economic Community of West African States

On 30 March, during the 44th Summit of the heads of state and government of West Africa, Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) disbursed US\$250,000 to deal with the outbreak. At the event in July 2014, the Nigerian government donated US\$500,000 to the Liberian government to aid the fight against the virus.

European Union

In March, the European Commission (EC) gave €500,000 to help contain the spread of the virus in Guinea and its neighbouring countries. The EC has also sent a health expert to Guinea to help assess the situation and liaise with the local authorities. EU Commissioner for International Cooperation, Humanitarian Aid and Crisis Response Kristalina Georgieva said: "We are deeply concerned about the spread of this virulent disease and our support will help ensure immediate health assistance to those affected by it. It's vital that we act swiftly to prevent the outbreak from spreading, particularly to neighbouring countries."

In April, a mobile laboratory, capable of performing the molecular diagnosis of viral pathogens of risk groups 3 and 4, was deployed in Guinea by the European Mobile Laboratory project (EMLab) as part of the WHO/GOARN outbreak response. Prior samples were analyzed at the Jean Mérieux BSL-4 Laboratory in Lyon.

Germany's Foreign Office issued travel warnings for all affected countries at the end of July, Spain did so on 2 August and the UK did on 20 August.

Australia

On 14 August, the Australian ambassador to the People's Republic of China revealed that the Australian government would donate US\$1 million to the World Health Organisation, in addition to its annual support, to assist in combating the Ebola outbreak.

Canada

On 12 August, the Public Health Agency of Canada (PHAC) announced that the country would donate between 800 and 1,000 doses of an untested vaccine (VSV-EBOV) to the WHO. The offer was made by the Minister of Health directly to the Director General of the WHO as part of the country's commitment to containment efforts. The Government of Canada holds the intellectual property associated with the vaccine, but has licensed BioProtection Systems of Ames, Iowa to develop the product for use in humans.

On 26 August, the PHAC said it is preparing to bring home three members from their mobile laboratory in Sierra Leone. The three Canadians were among six workers at the mobile lab. The team is from the National Microbiology Laboratory in Winnipeg. The recall follows the diagnoses of three persons, staying at the same hotel as the team members, with the Ebola virus. The team members had no direct contact with the infected persons and are not showing any signs of the disease. The team members will be monitored as they travel back to Canada and will remain in voluntary isolation until cleared, officials from the PHAC said.

On 6 September, the Public Health Agency of Canada announced that they will be resuming work at the Kailahun mobile laboratory after recalling them in late August for safety reasons. A three person team have been sent to the laboratory in eastern Sierra Leone. The team will rotate on a monthly basis.

Chad

The Prime Minister of Chad, Kalzeubet Pahimi Deubet, said it will follow in the footsteps of South Africa and impose travel restrictions to and from the countries currently affected by the Ebola outbreak. Chad will close all its borders to Nigeria to prevent the spread of the disease to the country. He added that this would have an economic impact to Chad and the region, but the restrictions are necessary.

China

A Chinese plane carrying supplies worth 30 million yuan (4.9 million US dollars) arrived in Guinea, Sierra Leone, and Liberia on 11 August. This is their second Ebola relief after the first batch delivered in May to Guinea, Liberia, Sierra Leone, and Guinea-Bissau. The supplies include medical protective clothes, disinfectants, thermo-detectors, and medicines. China also sent three expert teams composed of epidemiologists and specialists in disinfection and protection as well as medical supplies to Guinea, Liberia, and Sierra Leone despite high risk of infection. Before their arrival, eight members of a Chinese medical team sent to assist patients in Sierra Leone's hospitals were quarantined after treating Ebola patients.

Some Chinese companies in West Africa also joined the relief efforts. China Kingho Group, a leading exploration and mining company in Sierra Leone, donated 400 million Leones (about \$90,000) to the Government and People of Sierra Leone on 15 August.

On 16 August, Chinese President Xi Jinping and UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon on Saturday discussed several hot issues, including Ebola, in their fourth meeting this year. The meeting in Nanjing, capital of east China's Jiangsu Province, was held before they attended the opening ceremony of the 2nd Summer Youth Olympic Games.

Colombia

On 8 August, the Vice Minister of Health and Social Protection of Colombia, Fernando Ruiz, assured the public that the Government is preparing itself to face the virus even though Colombia's given conditions don't give Ebola the chance to natively spread since "the bat species in charge of transmitting the disease nor the practice of eating it aren't present in Colombia."

Equatorial Guinea

Equatorial Guinea temporarily stopped issuing visas from neighbouring countries and cancelled regional flights by Ceiba Intercontinental Airlines.

Ghana

On 30 August, the Ghanaian Presidency released a press statement, announcing the country's willingness to use Accra as a support base to help fight Ebola in the stricken countries. This agreement follows a telephonic meeting with the United Nations chief, Ban Ki-moon and John Dramani Mahama, the President of Ghana. Accra will serve as a base for air lifting medical and other supplies to countries affected by the Ebola outbreak, as well as personnel to curtail the disease.

Ivory Coast

The Ivory Coast, on 22 August, released a statement on state-owned television announcing the closure of its borders to the neighbouring countries affected by the Ebola outbreak. Attempting to prevent the Ebola outbreak of the virus from spreading to the Ivory Coast, the government announced the closure of all its land based borders to the country's West African neighbours Guinea and Liberia.

The Ivory Coast previously placed a ban on all flights to and from Sierra Leone, Liberia, and Guinea.

Japan

In April, the Government of Japan gave \$520,000 through the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) to support the Ebola outbreak response in Guinea. In August, another \$1.5 million in additional support was provided to be disbursed via the WHO, UNICEF and Red Cross, and will be used for measures to prevent Ebola infections and to provide medical supplies.

On 25 August, Japanese authorities announced that they would be willing to provide access to an anti-influenza drug currently under development called favipiravir to try to treat EVD patients.

Kenya

The Kenyan government banned people travelling from or through Sierra Leone, Guinea, and Liberia for all ports of entry.

Morocco

Beginning in April, Morocco reinforced medical surveillance at the Casablanca airport, a regional hub for flights from and to West Africa. In early August, Liberian interior minister Morris Dukuly announced the Ebola death of a Liberian man in the country, but the Moroccan Ministry of Health announced that the person died of a heart attack, rather than Ebola.

Philippines

The Philippine Department of Foreign Affairs has raised Alert Level 2 in Guinea, Liberia, and Sierra Leone and has temporarily halted the sending of Filipino workers to the affected countries since 30 June. Filipino seafarers are also cautioned about potentially contracting Ebola when their ship docks in affected countries. The Department of Health expressed its willingness to send medical workers to Ebola-affected countries to help contain the outbreak. On 23 August, the Philippines announced that it is pulling out its 115 UN peacekeepers stationed in Liberia due to the increasing health risk the troops face due to the outbreak.

Qatar

Qatar has banned the import of live animals, food and meat products from Guinea, Liberia, Sierra Leone, and Nigeria as a precaution against Ebola.

Seychelles

Seychelles introduced a visa requirement for the citizens of Sierra Leone, Liberia, Guinea-Bissau, Guinea Conakry, Nigeria, Cameroon, Chad, Niger, Burkina Faso, Mali, Benin, Ivory Coast, Ghana, Togo, Congo, D.R. Congo, Gambia, Mauritania, and Senegal. Citizens of these countries will require a visa until the Ebola outbreak is declared over. Members of the Sierra Leone national football team were refused visas over the outbreak.

Saudi Arabia

On 1 April, Saudi Arabia stopped issuing visas for the Muslim pilgrimage to Mecca to people from Guinea, Liberia, and Sierra Leone.

On 5 August, Saudi Arabia announced that it would block issuance of Hajj and Umrah visas to the citizens of Sierra Leone, Guinea, and Liberia.

On 6 August, the Saudi Ministry of Health advised citizens and residents of Saudi Arabia to avoid travelling to Liberia, Sierra Leone, and Guinea until further notice.

South Africa

On 21 August, South Africa announced a ban on all travelers from the three Ebola-hit West African nations. A government spokesman confirmed they are following other countries responses to the disease outbreak. The health ministry of South Africa confirmed that the country's citizens would be asked to limit travel to absolutely essential needs, if going to the countries involved in the current outbreak. All South Africans returning from these countries would only be allowed back after undergoing extensive medical tests, and quarantine, if necessary.

Sri Lanka

Sri Lanka cancelled visa on-arrival facility on 21 August for citizens of Guinea, Liberia, Nigeria, and Sierra Leone.



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developindiamediagroupprporate@gmail.com
developindia2011@gmail.com
civilservicesminerva@gmail.com