

Obama:

Ebola Monitoring Must Be More Aggressive

BY JIM KUHNHENN
 Associated Press

WASHINGTON — President Barack Obama vowed Wednesday that his administration would respond in a "much more aggressive way" to cases of Ebola in the United States and warned that in an age of frequent travel the disease could spread globally if the world doesn't respond to the "raging epidemic in West Africa."

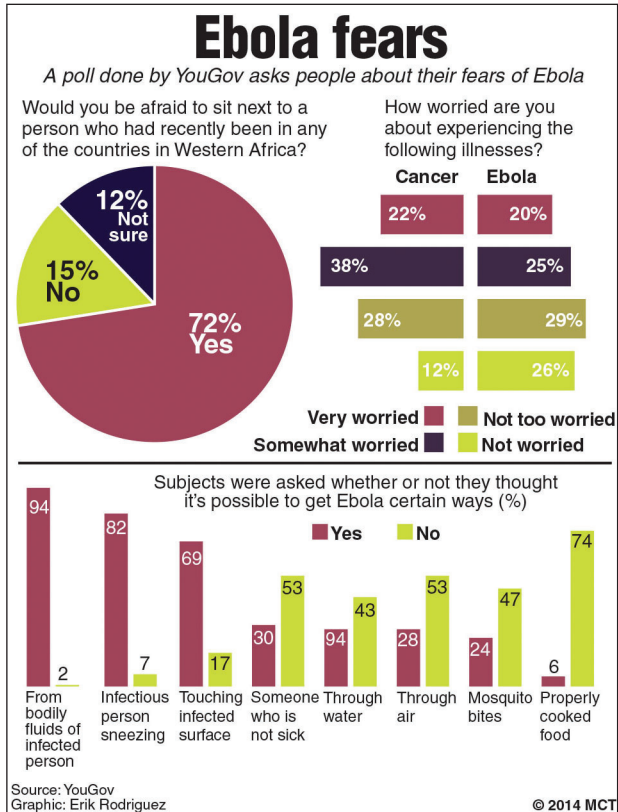
In his most urgent comments on the spread of the disease, Obama also sought to ease growing anxiety and fears in the U.S. in the aftermath of a second nurse being diagnosed with Ebola after treating a patient in a Dallas hospital. He said he had directed the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention to step up its response to new cases.

"We want a rapid response team, a SWAT team essentially, from the CDC to be on the ground as quickly as possible, hopefully within 24 hours, so that they are taking the local hospital step by step though what needs to be done," he said.

Obama spoke after cancelling a political campaign trip to convene a session of top Cabinet officials involved in the Ebola response both in the U.S. and in the West African region where the disease has been spreading at alarming rates.

Participants in the meeting were a roster of Cabinet secretaries and top Obama advisers, including Defense Secretary Chuck Hagel, Attorney General Eric Holder, Health and Human Services Secretary Sylvia Burwell and Joint Chiefs of Staff Chairman Gen. Martin Dempsey.

Even as he raised the potential for global contagion,



Obama also stressed that the danger in the United States remained a long shot.

"Here's what we know about Ebola. It's not like the flu. It's not airborne," he said.

He made the point of noting that when he visited with health care workers who had attended to Ebola patients at Emory University Hospital in Atlanta, he hugged and kissed them without fear of infection. "They followed the protocols, they knew what they were doing," he said. "I felt perfectly safe doing so."

Hours before Obama cancelled his trip, officials confirmed that a second nurse at a Dallas had tested positive for the virus after treating an Ebola patient who later died. The disclosure raised new fears regarding the exposure by other health care workers. Officials also revealed that the nurse was on a commercial flight the evening before being diagnosed.

House Speaker John Boehner said Obama should consider a temporary ban on travel to the United States from the West African countries afflicted by the virus and that the president should weigh other measures "as doubts about the security of our air travel systems grow."

Administration officials have resisted a travel ban, saying that adequate screening measures are already in place — only once has an Ebola victim flown into the U.S. — and that a ban could

hinder assistance to the afflicted.

The House Energy and Commerce Committee scheduled a hearing on the outbreak Thursday.

The Texas developments added a new domestic element to what has developed into an Ebola crisis in the West African countries of Guinea, Sierra Leone and Liberia. Obama has been pressing the international community to step up its assistance in combating the disease.

On Wednesday, Obama spoke by phone with British Prime Minister David Cameron, French President Francois Hollande, German Chancellor Angela Merkel and Italian Prime Minister Matteo Renzi. The White House said Obama stressed that the world must provide the finances and personnel needed "to bend the curve of the epidemic" and said it amounts to a "human tragedy as well as a threat to international security."

He made a similar case to Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe on Tuesday, the White House said.

Obama spoke after the White House conceded shortcomings in the response to the Liberian Ebola patient's care.

White House spokesman Josh Earnest noted that CDC director Dr. Tom Frieden had declared that even one health care worker being exposed was unacceptable.

"So that is an indication that there were shortcomings," Earnest said.

Asked how the nurse was able to fly to and from Ohio over the weekend, Earnest said, "It's not clear what protocols were in place and how those protocols were implemented."

Stocks Swing Wildly, Down 173 Points

NEW YORK (AP) — Stocks are ending a wild day mostly lower as indexes recover much of an early plunge.

Investors dumped risky assets Wednesday in heavy trading and parked their money in investments seen as relatively safe, such as U.S. government bonds.

The Dow Jones industrial average plummeted as much as 460 points in afternoon trading, then clawed back much of the ground it lost. It ended down 173 points, or 1.1 percent, at 16,141.

The Standard & Poor's 500 fell 15 points, or 0.8 percent, to 1,862. The Nasdaq fell 11 points, or 0.3 percent, to 4,215.

A late-afternoon recovery erased much of the losses. The S&P 500 and the Nasdaq are now slightly higher for the year.

Kurds Prove Remarkably Resilient

MURSPINAR, Turkey (AP) — Intensified U.S.-led airstrikes and a determined Kurdish military force on the ground appear to have had some success in halting advances by Islamic State fighters on a strategic Kurdish town near Syria's border with Turkey — at least for now.

On Wednesday, the Kurdish militiamen were fighting ferocious street battles with the Sunni extremists in Kobani and making advances on some fronts, hours after the U.S.-led coalition stepped up its aerial campaign.

In a surprising display of resilience, the Kurdish fighters have held out against the more experienced jihadists a month into the militants' offensive on the frontier town, hanging on to their territory against all expectations.

"People underestimate the power of determination," said Farhad Shami, a Kurdish activist in Kobani. "The Kurds have a cause and are prepared to die fighting for it."

They also have the advantage of fighting on familiar ground.

Hong Kong Police Action Sparks Outrage

HONG KONG (AP) — Riot police moving against activists sparked outrage after officers were seen kicking a handcuffed protester and dragging dozens of others away Wednesday in the worst violence against the pro-democracy demonstrations in Hong Kong since they began more than two weeks ago.

Clashes that erupted before dawn Wednesday continued early Thursday, as police used pepper spray to push back crowds of protesters trying to occupy a road outside the government's headquarters.

Tensions were high but the scenes were not as chaotic as on Wednesday, when protesters were knocked to the ground by hundreds of police, some with batons, pepper spray and shields.

The clashes have worsened an already bitter standoff between authorities and activists who have taken over key roads and streets in the city to press for democratic reforms.

"Hong Kong police have gone insane today, carrying out their own punishment in private," said pro-democracy lawmaker Lee Cheuk-yan. "Hong Kong's values and its rule of law really have been completely destroyed by police chiefs."

Nurse With Ebola Arrives In Atlanta

ATLANTA (AP) — A second Dallas nurse diagnosed with Ebola was transferred Wednesday from Texas to a specialized hospital isolation unit in Atlanta that has already treated three Americans with the virus.

Helicopter footage from local television stations showed 29-year-old Amber Joy Vinson leaving a jet and being helped into an ambulance Wednesday night. A police motorcade escorted the ambulance as it traveled to Emory University Hospital.

Texas Health Presbyterian Hospital, which had been treating Vinson, confirmed her arrival in a tweet.

Vinson was one of the nurses who cared for Thomas Eric Duncan, who died at the Dallas hospital last week of the Ebola virus. Another of Duncan's nurses, Nina Pham, is also being treated for Ebola at the Texas hospital and was in "improved condition" Wednesday, said Dr. Tom Frieden, director of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

Meanwhile, an American doctor undergoing treatment for Ebola said he had been critically ill but is now recovering and expects to be discharged soon from Emory University Hospital.

The unidentified patient — a doctor working for the World Health organization at an Ebola treatment center in Sierra Leone — arrived at the hospital on Sept. 9. He said in a statement released



NATHAN HUNSINGER/DALLAS MORNING NEWS/MCT
 Cleaners in hazmat suits unload barrels for cleaning Amber Vinson's home in The Village apartment complex in Dallas on Wednesday. Vinson is the third person in Dallas to contract Ebola.

by Emory that his condition worsened soon after he arrived but he is now much better.

The doctor is one of three American aid workers brought to Emory from West Africa; the other two recovered. Emory and three other U.S. hospitals have specialized isolation units to care for Ebola with less risk of spread to health care workers.

The WHO doctor had asked Emory to release the news about his improved condition following reports of the two recently infected Texas nurses. But he did not give his name, and hospital officials have refused to identify him, citing the wishes of the patient and his family.

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