

United States Militarizing Response to Ebola Crisis While Cuba Pledges Medical Assistance

Delegation found dead in Guinea while disease continues to spread

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A team of eight experts and journalists visiting the southern region of the West African state of Guinea were found dead in the town of Nzerekore on Sept. 20. Reports indicate that they were there to educate people about the nature of the disease for the purpose of its prevention.

Reports from Guinea say that the delegation had met with elders in the community but were later attacked by youths. Investigations into the details of the killings are ongoing.

There is tremendous mistrust surrounding the spread of the Ebola Virus Disease in some West African states where the epidemic has had an impact. Doctors Without Borders reported in April that their teams were forced to withdraw from Macenta in Guinea after being stoned by youth who said they were there to spread the disease.

Newspaper articles and rumors have circulated that the outbreak is a direct result of biological warfare being waged by imperialist countries against the African continent.

Although no one knows what the motivations were of those who carried out the killings in Guinea, obviously there are many people who mistrust the motivations of foreign aid workers responding to the crisis. Guinea is the first country that was identified in the latest spread of the disease which has periodically struck in Central and West Africa over the last three decades.

Biological Warfare and Economic Underdevelopment

The most widely discussed and controversial article related to the spread of the Ebola Virus Disease was published by the leading newspaper in Liberia, The Observer. Dr. Cyril Broderick, a former professor of plant pathology at the University there, asserted that the spread of the disease is a direct result of U.S. Department of Defense bio-warfare against Africa.

Broderick's article was published on Sept. 9 and stated that "Africa must not relegate the Continent to become the locality for disposal and the deposition of hazardous chemicals, dangerous drugs, and chemical or biological agents of emerging diseases. There is urgent need for affirmative action in protecting the less affluent of poorer countries, especially African citizens, whose countries are not as scientifically and industrially endowed as the United States and most Western countries, sources of most viral or bacterial GMOs that are strategically designed as biological weapons. It is most disturbing that the U. S. Government

has been operating a viral hemorrhagic fever bioterrorism research laboratory in Sierra Leone.”

This same author goes on to ask “Are there others? Wherever they exist, it is time to terminate them. If any other sites exist, it is advisable to follow the delayed but essential step: Sierra

Leone closed the US bioweapons lab and stopped Tulane University for further testing.” (Sept. 9)

Broderick has been attacked for publishing the article and according to Health Impact News “The western pro-pharma media has chided Dr. Broderick, saying that such an inflammatory piece of writing is ‘irresponsible’ since so many Africans are already distrustful of western medicine. They see western medicine as the answer to Africa’s deadly diseases such as Ebola, while Dr. Broderick sees it as the cause. Dr. Broderick states ‘African people are not ignorant and gullible, as is being implicated.’” (healthimpactnews.com, Sept. 21)

Following the publication of this article, President Barack Obama announced on Sept. 16 that the U.S. would deploy 3,000 troops to the affected West African states as a means to combat the disease. Obama said in a press release that “The United States will leverage the unique capabilities of the U.S. military and broader uniformed services to help bring the epidemic under control. These efforts will entail command and control, logistics expertise, training, and engineering support.” (White House press statement)

Washington is already heavily involved militarily in Africa. Several thousand Pentagon troops, Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) operatives and State Department functionaries are on the continent as part of the U.S. Africa Command (AFRICOM). This intervention since 2008 has created more instability and underdevelopment in Africa as represented by the events in Egypt, Mali, Libya, Somalia, South Sudan and Nigeria where the ostensible partnerships aimed at curbing “terrorism” has prompted the intensification of conflict, dislocation and in the case of the Horn of Africa, famine.

Pentagon and CIA drone operations have carried out numerous targeted assassinations in Somalia. In Mali, a U.S.-trained military officer returned to this former French colony and staged a coup providing a rationale for internal destabilization as well as an ongoing occupation by Paris.

Cuba Offers Medical Solidarity

Meanwhile the revolutionary nation of Cuba pledged to send medical personnel in the fight against the disease. Cuba has a profound history in providing unconditional solidarity with the African continent.

In an address on Sept. 18 before the United Nations Security Council emergency session on Ebola, Vice Minister of Foreign Relations Abelardo Moreno told the participants that “Cuba’s response is part of our solidarity with Africa, Asia and Latin America and the Caribbean. Over the last 55 years we have collaborated in more than 158 countries, with the participation of 325,710 health workers. 76,744 collaborators have worked in 39 African countries. Today, in this sector, 4,048 Cubans are serving in 32 African nations; 2,269 of whom are doctors.” (granma.cu, Sept. 19)

Moreno went on the report that “The medical brigades which will be sent to Africa to fight

against Ebola form part of the “Henry Reeve International Contingent” – created in 2005 – composed of doctors specializing in combating disasters and large-scale epidemics. Cuba’s response confirms the values of solidarity which have guided the Cuban Revolution: not to give what we can spare, but to share what we have.”

This approach contrasts sharply with that of the White House and Pentagon. Cuba has built up considerable trust in Africa due to its consistent policy of international solidarity.

At least three countries which have reported Ebola cases are reporting improvements in fighting the disease and its proliferation. In Nigeria the Federal Government announced that schools would be re-opened on Sept. 22 despite opposition from the sections of the Nigerian Union of Teachers (NUT).

In Sierra Leone there was a state of emergency declared restricting movements for three days. The government announced on Sept. 22 that the situation was now under control. Similar announcements have been made in reference to developments in Senegal where at least one case has been reported.

Nonetheless, there have been nearly 3,000 deaths reported from the disease. In addition there are still numerous questions related to the conditions under which the disease is spread and the most effective means to treat and eradicate the epidemic. (WHO Update, Sept. 22)

This outbreak does draw attention to the need for genuine independence and development on the African continent. The training of medical personnel and scientific researchers would contribute immensely to preventing future healthcare crises.

Cuban revolutionary foreign policy provides an example of how underdeveloped states which have a legacy of slavery, colonialism and neo-colonialism can transform through a process of class struggle and self-reliance. With over five decades of hostility from the U.S., Cuba has been able to make significant contributions to African liberation whether in the fight against settler-colonialism in Southern Africa in years past or through the contemporary challenges related to the Ebola outbreak, the training of African medical personnel and other healthcare issues.

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