

NATO Watch News Brief:

Calls for NATO to assist in Ebola outbreak grow louder

31 October 2014

www.natowatch.org Promoting a more transparent and accountable NATO

On Wednesday [a group of more than 40 senior European political, diplomatic and military figures called](#) for NATO to deploy hospital ships, heavy-lifting helicopters and medical teams to help fight Ebola in West Africa. Signatories including two former NATO secretary generals (George Robertson and Jaap de Hoop Schefer) and three ex-prime ministers said in two open letters that the World Health Organisation (WHO) and United Nations should ask for help from NATO, whose "unique capabilities ... could make a difference in this situation." This is action that [NATO Watch has been advocating](#) for the last two weeks.

The letters [to NATO chief Jens Stoltenberg](#), UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon and WHO Director-General Margaret Chan were drafted by the European Leadership Network think tank in London.

The international response to the Ebola outbreak has been led by the US and the UK, who have both sent military personnel to the region.

The WHO says that [Ebola infections worldwide now number over 13,000](#). Dr Bruce Aylward, the assistant director general of WHO, said that while there had been an encouraging drop in the number of new cases recorded in Liberia, infection rates could fluctuate. "There is increasing evidence that these countries can get on top of this and can turn the trends in the disease", he said. "But they need help doing it."

[Speaking in Brussels](#), NATO secretary general Jens Stoltenberg said that the organisation was in talks with the UN about the response to the crisis. "The world reacted too slowly and too late but now real efforts are being made by the UN, by the UK, US and other countries and of course through countries in the region," he said. "And NATO allies are contributing."

Jim Yong Kim, the president of the World Bank, [is worried about a lack of volunteers](#) willing to go to West Africa. "Right now, I'm very much worried about where we will find those health-care workers. With the fear factor going out of control in so many places, I hope health-care professionals will understand that when they took their oath to become a health-care worker it was precisely for moments like this", he said

Erik Prince, the founder of the American private military company Blackwater (now renamed Academi), has [some radical ideas](#) about how private contractors could take part in efforts in West Africa. Prince suggests that by using a large supply vessel floating off the coast of West Africa, private contractors could quickly deliver crucial medical assistance to where it is needed. "We could carry 250 vehicles, couple of helicopters, couple of landing craft, and everything else -- so that's all your mobility equipment," he said in an interview. "Everything else was containerized: food, medicine, field hospitals, tents, water purification, generators, fuel -- everything you'd need for a humanitarian disaster."