

# CRS Insights

Increased Department of Defense Role in U.S. Ebola Response  
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## Increased Department of Defense Role in Ebola Response

On September 16, 2014, President Obama announced [a major increase](#) in the United States response to the current Ebola outbreak in West Africa. The Department of Defense (DOD) submitted requests to Congress to make excess Overseas Contingency Operations funds appropriated for FY2014 available to support this effort. The requested funds would be used to provide humanitarian assistance, including:

- transportation of DOD and non-DOD personnel and supplies;
- coordination delivery of supplies from both DOD and non-DOD sources such as isolation units, personnel protective equipment and medical supplies;
- construction of 27 planned Ebola treatment units; and,
- training and education in support of sanitation and mortuary affairs functions to limit the spread of the Ebola outbreak.

DOD officials have stated that DOD personnel will not provide direct medical care to Ebola victims, but that non-governmental organizations are submitting proposals to the World Health Organization and other entities to provide health care workers.

## DOD Reprogramming Requests

DOD submitted two separate prior approval reprogramming requests dated September 8 and September 17 to the House and Senate appropriations and armed services committees. These would make available up to \$1 billion for DOD's support of the United States' response to the current Ebola outbreak in West Africa. Some of the funding in the initial \$500 million request also would be available to support continuing humanitarian activities in Iraq. The President's announcement stated that the U.S. Africa Command will set up a Joint Force Command headquartered in Monrovia, Liberia, to provide regional command and control support to U.S. military activities and to facilitate coordination with U.S. government and international relief efforts. A general from U.S. Army Africa, the Army component of U.S. Africa Command, will lead this effort, which will involve an estimated 3,000 U.S. forces. A breakdown of the units from which troops will come and a timeline for anticipated deployments are not available at this time.

## Source of Reprogrammed Funds

No new appropriations are requested. Under special transfer authority, DOD is asking for prior approval to reprogram funds from accounts that experienced lower than expected costs for planned activities. These funds come primarily from Overseas Contingency Operations appropriations for FY2014 where there were lower than expected maintenance costs and lower than expected civilian and contract personnel subsistence costs.

## Congressional Approval Required

Under DOD regulations, the House and Senate armed services and appropriations committees must provide written approval before DOD can effectuate the reprogramming.