

Cuba's Ebola Aid Latest Example of 'Medical Diplomacy'



Havana, September 17 (NNN-RHC) -- Cuba's pledge to deploy a 165-strong army of doctors and nurses to help fight the Ebola outbreak is the latest example of the country's decades-old tradition of "medical diplomacy."

Since 1960, when Cuba dispatched a team of doctors to help with the aftermath of an earthquake in Chile, the Caribbean island has sent more than 135,000 medical staff to all corners of the globe.

The latest batch being sent to help in west Africa's Ebola crisis are part of a 50,000-strong foreign legion of Cuban doctors and healthcare workers spread across 66 countries in Latin America, Asia and Africa, according to Cuba's Health Ministry.

Cuban Health Minister Roberto Morales Ojeda told reporters in Geneva last week that 62 doctors and 103 nurses were being sent to Sierra Leone to tackle the outbreak.

World Health Organization director general Margaret Chan welcomed the Cuban aid, the largest offer of a foreign medical team from a single country during the outbreak. "Money and materials are important, but

those two things alone cannot stop Ebola virus transmission," said Chan. "Human resources are clearly our most important need."

Morales said members of the team had "previously participated in post-catastrophe situations" and had all volunteered for the six-month mission, which begins in early October.

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