

## Ebola vaccine promising

Say scientists after first human trial

BBC ONLINE

The first human trial of an experimental vaccine against Ebola suggests that it is safe and may help the immune system to combat the virus. Twenty volunteers were immunised in the United States. Scientists at the US National Institutes of Health (NIH) described the results as "promising". The research is published in the New England Journal of Medicine (NEJM). None of those immunised suffered major side-effects and all produced antibodies.

Dr Anthony Fauci of the NIH told the BBC: "On safety and on the ability to produce an appropriate immune response we can call this trial an unqualified success, even though it was an early Phase One trial."

The volunteers were divided into two groups, receiving either a low or high dose. The antibody response was stronger among those receiving the higher dose. The investigators found that seven of the high dose and two of the low dose volunteers produced T-cell immune responses, which may be important in protection against Ebola viruses.

The vaccine uses a chimpanzee cold virus which has been genetically engineered to carry a non-infectious Ebola protein on its surface.

There are four trials underway of this experimental vaccine.

The US vaccine is bivalent - aimed at giving protection against the Sudan and Zaire strains of Ebola. It is the latter which is responsible for the current outbreak.

Trials of a monovalent vaccine - against the Zaire strain - are also underway in Oxford, Mali and Switzerland.

If these also yield positive results then the monovalent vaccine will be offered to thousands of health workers in west Africa.



Demonstrators hold up placards as they march along a street in central London on Wednesday during a protest over the US court decision not to charge the policeman who killed unarmed black teenager Michael Brown in the town of Ferguson.

PHOTO: AFP

## European MPs back break-up of Google

AFP, Strasbourg

The European Parliament voted overwhelmingly for the break-up of Google yesterday in a largely symbolic vote that nevertheless cast another blow in the four-year standoff between Brussels and the US Internet giant.

In a direct challenge to Google, MEPs assembled in Strasbourg approved a resolution calling on the EU to consider ordering search engines to separate their commercial services from their businesses.

While Google is not directly mentioned in the proposal, the California-based search engine is clearly the target. The resolution passed with 384 in favour and only 174 votes against.

The European Parliament has no

power to launch the break-up of Google, but the move, introduced by two senior lawmakers, is further indication that the mood towards the company in Europe has soured.

Google has become an increasing source of worry for European officials on issues ranging from privacy to the protection of national publishers.

Since 2010, Google has been under investigation by the European Commission in response to complaints that its search engine, the world's biggest, was squeezing out competitors in Europe.

Google and Brussels have also clashed over the so-called "right to be forgotten", in which the EU's top court ruled last year that people had a right to ask search engines to delete results involving them after a period of time.

## No return to democracy until 2016: Thai govt

THE GUARDIAN ONLINE

A Thai general election planned for next year will be delayed until 2016, a deputy prime minister said yesterday, pushing back the promised return to democracy.

The prime minister, Prayuth Chan-ocha, who led a military coup in May, had previously hinted at a delay to polls promised for late 2015.

The deputy prime minister, Prawit Wongsuwan, who is also defence minister, said elections would take place in 2016, citing groups opposed to the junta, or National Council for Peace and Order, as it is formally known, as one reason for the delay.

"We will be able to organise elections around the start of 2016 once the constitution is drafted," Prawit told reporters.

"Right now there are elements opposed to the National Council for Peace and Order."

Prayuth has outlined a year of reforms that are partly aimed at ending the political influence of former prime minister Thaksin Shinawatra.

The army has said the May coup was necessary to avoid further bloodshed after months of sometimes violent protests that helped oust Thaksin's sister, former prime

minister Yingluck Shinawatra.

The military scrapped the constitution shortly after it took power and has appointed a committee to draft a new one.

Last week, the government said martial law, which the army imposed days before it took power, will not be lifted for the foreseeable future, despite an earlier pledge to lift the law in some provinces to help the tourism sector which has struggled since the coup.

Thailand plunged into political crisis almost a decade ago following the ouster of Thaksin, a former telecoms tycoon who upset the establishment with populist policies that won him votes in Thailand's agrarian heartland.

Thailand has been broadly split ever since between his supporters and detractors.

Prawit appealed for understanding over the delayed polls.

"We are not asking for much. Just a year to resolve past problems."

The New York-based Human Rights Watch said this week that Thailand had "fallen into an apparently bottomless pit".

"Six months after the coup, criticism is systematically prosecuted, political activity is banned, media is censored, and dissidents are tried in military courts," it said.



Prayuth Chan-ocha

## Iraqi forces battle ISIS in Ramadi

AFP, Baghdad

Iraqi security forces have held off a jihadist assault on a government headquarters in troubled Anbar province, deploying reinforcements in the key battleground against the Islamic State group, officers said yesterday.

Pro-government troops, backed by tribesmen, managed to defend the complex in Ramadi, which lies 100 kilometres west of the capital and is one of the last major urban areas in Anbar under Baghdad's control.

The attack by ISIS fighters, as well as clashes in the northern province of Kirkuk, follow gains made elsewhere by government forces battling to recapture ground from the Sunni extremists.

"We were able to stop the militants from advancing in the government complex," said army Colonel Haytham al-Daraji who was involved in the defence of the area on Wednesday.

Four members of the security forces were killed and 21 wounded, according to the officer and a doctor.

Daraji said that more than 10 air strikes were carried out against the jihadists in Al-Hoz, an area from which security forces pulled back, allowing the jihadists to advance to within striking distance of the key government buildings.

He said reinforcements had been deployed in the city.

"If we lose Anbar, that means we will lose Iraq," the province's governor, Ahmed al-Dulaimi, told Al-Anbar television from Germany, where he is recovering after being wounded by a mortar round in September.

"I will very soon be with the tribes and the security forces in Anbar to fight" ISIS, Dulaimi said.

Iraqi security forces wilted under the initial June ISIS onslaught, but are now backed by US-led air strikes, interna-



US President Barack Obama pardons the National Thanksgiving Turkey "Cheese" during the annual ceremony in the Grand Foyer of the White House in Washington, DC, on Wednesday. For the sixth time, Obama pardoned the bird at a ceremony at which he was joined by his daughters Sasha and Malia, 13 and 16. Thanksgiving is celebrated each year on the last Thursday of November.

PHOTO: AFP

## Valerie Amos to step down

AFP, United Nations

The top UN official for humanitarian aid, Valerie Amos, who oversaw international relief efforts in Syria and other trouble spots, announced Wednesday she is stepping down.

Amos had been in the key post for more than four years, overseeing major aid operations in Syria as well as in South Sudan, Iraq and the Central African Republic.

Her departure comes as the United Nations is struggling to cope with a record 50 million people displaced from conflict.

In a letter to UN staff, Amos said she would be leaving in March after working at "the most challenging, demanding and



rewarding job I have ever done" as UN under-secretary general for humanitarian affairs and emergency relief coordinator.

She gave no specific reason for her departure but recalled that she was now the longest-serving top UN aid official, one of the most demanding jobs at the United Nations.

UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon expressed gratitude and praised Amos for the extensive experience she brought to the post.

Born in Guyana, Amos has been a lifelong campaigner for human rights.

Amos, who holds the title of baroness, was the first black woman to sit in the British cabinet following her appointment as international development secretary in 2003.

## West struggles with Russia's 'ambiguous warfare' tactics

REUTERS, Washington

When Russians crossed the border to fight with rebels in eastern Ukraine earlier this year, Moscow said the soldiers had not been deployed but had gone on their own vacation time.

When Estonia was the victim of a cyber attack in 2007 and blamed Moscow, the Kremlin responded that it could not always control patriotic Russian hackers.

Western strategists who built their defenses to counter a massive invasion, nuclear missiles or terrorism are still trying to work out how to cope with this sort of threat that disrupts and destabilizes from behind a mask of deniability.

After soldiers without insignia took control in Crimea last March, Western military officials developed their own nickname for Russian personnel operating in unmarked uniforms or in plainclothes: Little Green Men.

Nato is considering how to counter such "ambiguous warfare" techniques should Russian President Vladimir Putin try something similar in the Baltic member states of Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia.

It has deployed some US and allied tanks and planes there to signal Nato's commitment to defend all its members with force and is considering bolstering police there, perhaps with officers from Nordic states, to help detect any Russian infiltration.

Military experts say Russia's unconventional strategy on its western flank, especially in non-Nato member Ukraine, is proving remarkably effective, and it has recently been combined with a global show of force on a scale not seen since the Cold War.

Russian warships probed the limits of Australian territorial waters before the G20 summit in Brisbane this month and Moscow said nuclear bomber patrols which have been overflying western Europe would now reach as far as the Gulf of Mexico.

Russia's underlying point, western analysts say, is clear: as it reasserts its influence over countries on its borders, it is reminding the West of how cataclysmic the consequences could be if military force were used to stop them.

Many officials and experts say privately that both the West and the government in Kiev ultimately will have to accept greater federalism and a Russian influence in eastern Ukraine.

The issue will then be whether Putin interprets it as a sign of weakness and a green light to consider similar tactics against Nato members like the Baltic states.

"It's not quite a new Cold War, but it's a very different situation to where we were a few years ago," said Elbridge Colby, a former Pentagon official and now senior fellow with the Center for a New American Security. "I don't think we've yet formulated a proper strategy for dealing with that."



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